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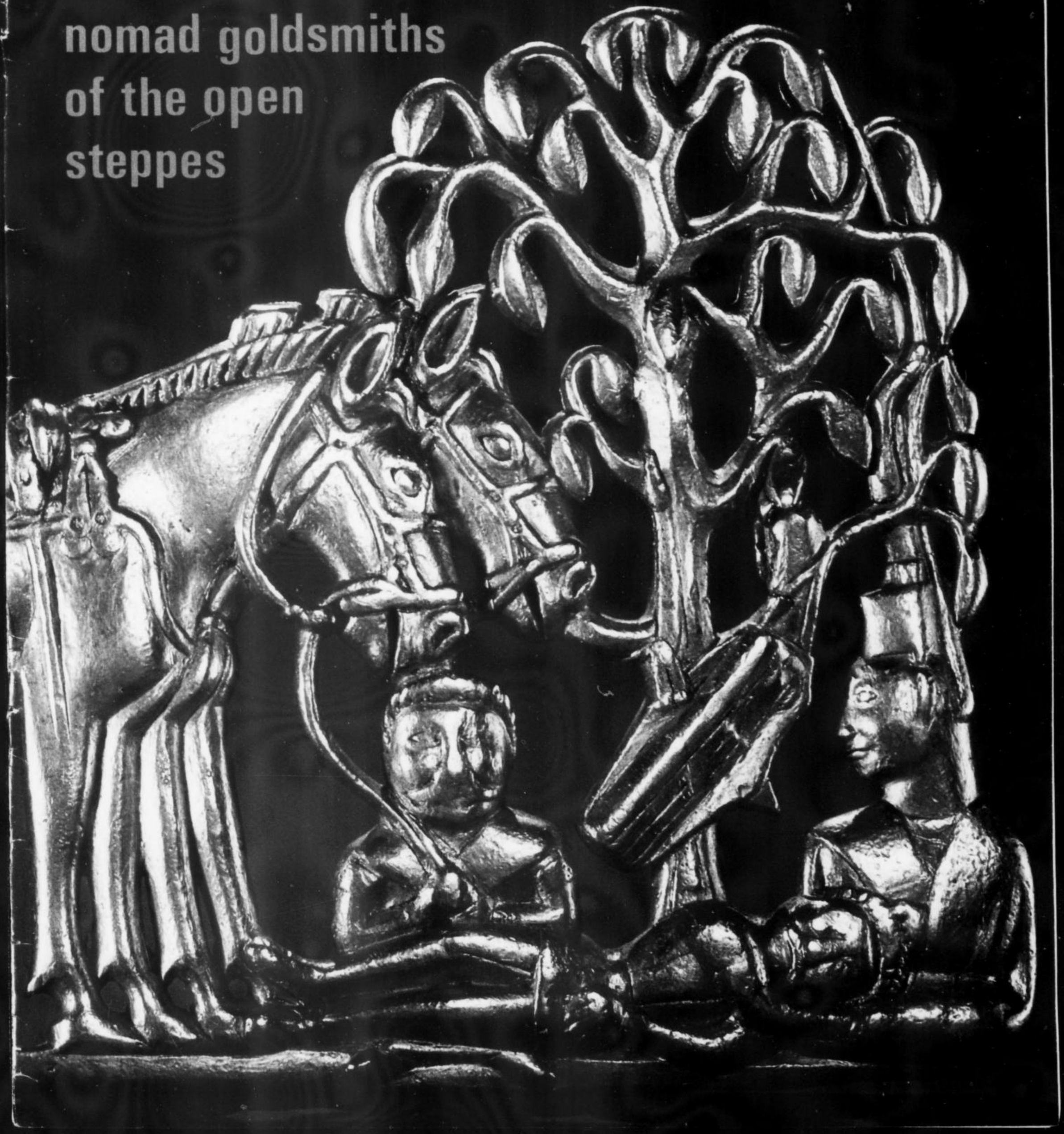
The UNESCO Courier

A window open on the world

THE SCYTHIANS

nomad goldsmiths of the open steppes



TREASURES
OF
WORLD ART

115

Greece

The saint with a dog's head

There are many legends about St. Christopher, including one that he once carried Christ across a river, thus earning his name (*Christoferos* in Greek, meaning "bearer of Christ"). According to some accounts he was a giant with a dog's face, only receiving human features at baptism. Other stories relate that St. Christopher, an exceptionally good-looking man who lived in the 3rd century, received such frequent attentions from the fair sex that he begged God to save him from temptation. His prayer was answered by a miracle: from then on women who looked upon his handsome face saw only the head of a dog. St. Christopher was thus often depicted with a dog's head, as in this fresco painted in 1779 by a Greek artist in a 13th-century Byzantine church at Lindos, on the island of Rhodes.

Photo © Hannibal Slides, Athens

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Editorial Office
Unesco, Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris - France

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Assistant Editors-in-Chief
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Research : Christiane Boucher

Layout and Design : Robert Jacquemin

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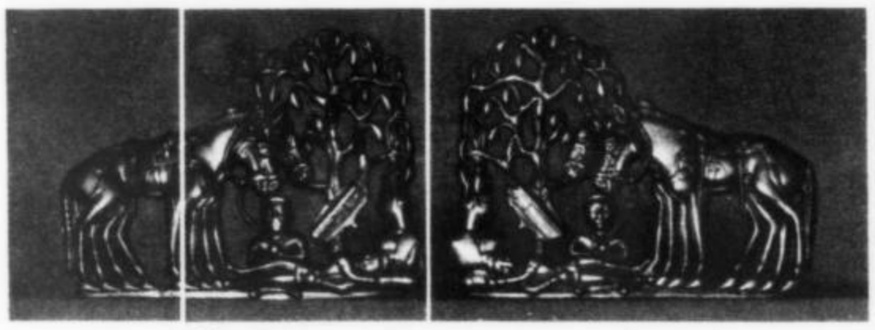

Photo Lee Boltin
© The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Cover

Horsemen repose in the shade of a leafy tree. One holds the bridle of their two mounts while the other lies outstretched with his head in the lap of a seated woman. This scene from the life of the nomads of the steppes is depicted on a symmetrical pair of gold plaques once worn on a sword-belt and preserved among the treasures of the art collection of Tsar Peter the Great. They are one of the myriad examples of the creative genius of the artists of the steppes, homelands of Scythian and Siberian horsemen 2,500 years ago. This issue of the *Unesco Courier* is entirely devoted to this cultural universe which flourished in Antiquity at the crossroads of Asia and Europe.

THE SCYTHIAN WORLD

This golden stag (see detail in colour, page 23) is a superb example of typical Scythian animal art. Discovered in a tomb in the Kuban region, north-east of the Black Sea, it was made by a master-goldsmith of the steppes early in the 6th century B.C. In the words of the Soviet archaeologist, Aleksandr Shkurko, an authority on early Scythian art, "The artist was not unduly concerned with modelling the animal's body or adding precise detail. What held his attention was its inner qualities—its strength, speed and essential wildness. The decorative treatment of the horns and the compactness of the composition confer on the image an almost heraldic appearance." The stag was a favourite theme in the art of the Scythians.

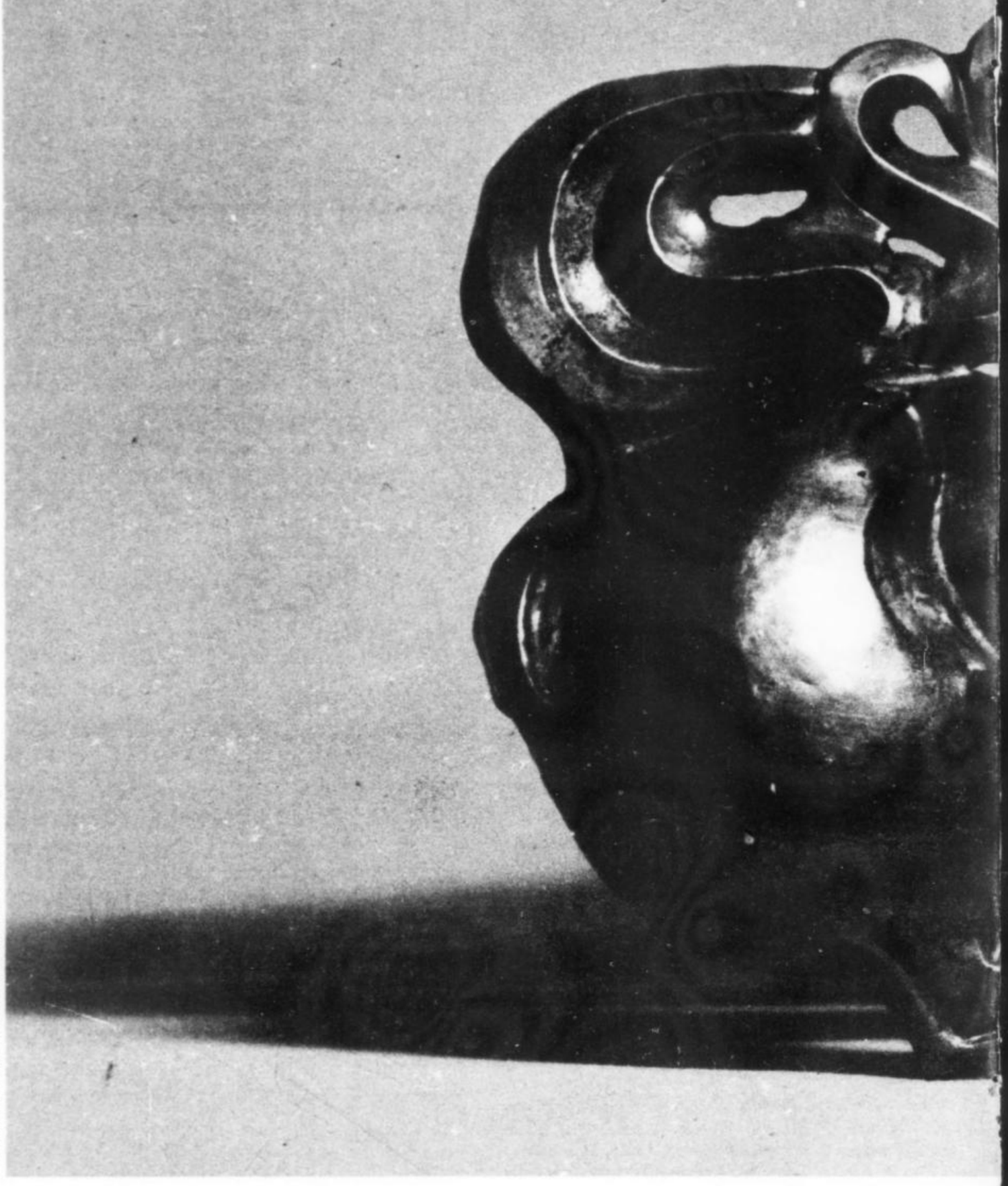

Photo L Tarassova © Aurora Art Publishers, Leningrad

by
Boris B. Piotrovsky

BORIS BORISOVICH PIOTROVSKY, *Soviet archaeologist, is an internationally known authority on the history and art of the Scythians. A member of the Academies of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. and the Armenian S.S.R., he is Director of the Hermitage Museum (Leningrad) which has a priceless collection of Scythian artifacts. He is also professor of Ancient Oriental History at the Leningrad State University. The author of important studies on the history, culture and art of the ancient Orient and the Caucasus, Prof. Piotrovsky is a corresponding fellow of the British Academy, the French Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, and the Bavarian Academy of Sciences.*

THE sweep and substance of the Scythian world have only recently been fully revealed, although the existence of the Scythians was recorded long ago, and they should not be regarded as one of the forgotten peoples of history.

Herodotus, writing about them in the fifth century B.C., included in his detailed account a number of Scythian or Greek legends concerning their origins, and stated that the lands which they occupied had previously belonged to the Cimmerians.

The flatlands north of the Black Sea, home of the Scythians who caught Herodotus' attention when they came down to do business in the Greek trading-colonies on the coast, are studded with kurgans. These burial mounds of earth, erected by the various nomadic tribes which roamed across the steppes, were themselves the subject of many a legend, and the treasure-seekers who plundered them in the past were certainly rewarded on more than one occasion.

a dynamic culture on the steppes of Eurasia 2500 years ago

Many of them had been built by the Scythians, and it was here that the first archaeologists unearthed outstanding examples of an art form characteristic of Scythian culture and dating mainly from the fifth to the third centuries B.C. Since then, hardly a year has passed without the delight of fresh discoveries by Ukrainian archaeologists.

Excavations began a considerable time ago. In 1763, a rich burial mound of the early Scythian period near Elizavetgrad (now Kirovograd) yielded a large number of gold and silver objects, including an iron *akinakes* (the short dagger of the Scythians) the scabbard and hilt of which were decorated in the ancient Eastern style with fantastic animals and anthropomorphic deities, gathered round a sacred tree. These interesting finds were placed in the Kunstkammer, Russia's first real museum, which had been founded by Peter the Great in 1714.

The Kunstkammer already contained a number of gold objects—later identified as Scythian—which had been found in Siberian kurgans and sent as gifts to Peter the Great in 1715 and 1716 by Nikita Demidov, the owner of mines and metalworks in the Urals, and by the Governor of Tobolsk, Prince Gagarin. In 1718, a special government decree ordered "the collecting from earth and water of old inscriptions, ancient weapons, dishes and everything old and unusual."

The Kunstkammer's "marvellous and mysterious collection of Siberian antiquities", as it was still called by

early nineteenth-century archaeologists, was only explained and identified when archaeological investigations over a wide area gradually revealed a considerable degree of cultural unity in the wide belt of steppe-land, foothills and upland pastures which stretched between the 40th and 50th parallels of latitude, from the Danube in the west all the way to the Great Wall of China in the east—a distance of more than 7,000 kilometres.

From one end to the other of this territory, archaeologists have unearthed identical pieces of horse gear, iron swords, triangular arrowheads and ornaments, all dating from the Scythian period, while cultural similarities between different regions are reflected in the widespread use of imagery in the so-called "Scytho-Siberian animal style."

But these links existed even earlier, and can certainly be clearly detected in the pre-Scythian, Cimmerian period (i.e. the eighth century B.C.). Convincing evidence of this is provided by the objects found in the Arzhan kurgan in the Tuva S.S.R., far to the east (see article page 38). This ruined tomb of a military leader yielded not only a number of items similar to finds from the Ukraine and Bulgaria, but also scraps of woven cloth of Iranian origin, pre-dating by almost 200 years the famous Iranian carpet discovered during excavations of the Pazyryk kurgans of the Altai (see article page 31).

Thus, in Cimmerian times, the conditions already existed for the establishment of contacts between widely separated territories, and for the creation of a generalized, semi-nomadic and stock-raising economy, in which the dominance of horse-breeding permitted mobility over long distances.

The network of relationships between different tribes made up for the lack of natural resources, and of metal deposits in particular, in different regions. The vast area covered by Scythian culture, where the most outstanding artifacts were made of gold, silver or high-quality bronze, contained few enough localities where the first two of these metals could be found, while tin, without which copper could not be transformed into bronze and which existed in Central Europe and Bohemia, was totally absent in the lands stretching from the Danube as far as eastern Kazakhstan.

Of course, there was no direct or permanent contact between the nomadic tribes inhabiting the western and eastern extremities of this world; the elements which composed their common culture were, so to speak, "shuttled" from tribe to tribe, often losing their stamp of origin in the process.

We should also remember that these breeders of cattle and horses, whether Cimmerians or Scythians, were—first and foremost—well-armed and highly mobile horse-soldiers, whose rapidly moving war-parties, according to Herodotus, penetrated deep into Asia Minor.

Herodotus' accounts have since been confirmed by ancient Eastern sources, and by documentary and archaeological evidence from Assyria in particular. Reports by scouts of the Assyrian king contained in the archive of clay tablets found in the Assyrian capital, Nineveh, refer to the appearance of Cimmerians in Asia Minor as early as the middle of the 8th century B.C.

The participation of Scythians in a devastating attack on Assyria a century later is mentioned in a chronicle of the Babylonian king Nabopolassar which relates events in 616-609 B.C., and in a 5th century account of the sack of Nineveh, by the Armenian historian Movses Horenatsi.

Excavations in seventh-century fortresses in Transcaucasia (at Karmir-Blur, near Erivan) and in the central region of ancient Urartu, near Lake Van (in present-day Turkey), have brought to light a number of items of horse gear, iron weapons and beads similar to objects found in ancient Scythian burials of the Black Sea region.

The Scythian connexion with Asia Minor is clearly reflected in the so-called "Ziwiyeh treasure" from Saqqez, in Iranian Kurdistan, discovered during the Second World War. Among the objects found here, which were subsequently proved to have come not from a treasure hoard but from a tomb constructed in the seventh century B.C., is an outstanding group of artifacts in which images characteristic of both ancient Near Eastern and Scythian art are combined.

The golden objects in Scythian style found at Ziwiyeh are similar to finds from Scythian burial mounds, such as the sword with a gold-covered

MY KINGDOM FOR A HORSE

Some Scythian jewels reveal numerous details of the dress, way of life and customs of these nomads of the steppes. The two bearded Scythian riders decorating the ends of this torque, or open necklace, of twisted gold are one example. The figures wear ankle-length caftans tied at the waist and long trousers held by a strap beneath the boot. They ride bareback and without stirrups. Their mounts emerge from the ends of the torque, woven of six gold strands bound in an intricately decorated sheath inlaid with enamel. The horses' manes and the harnesses and bridle bits are rendered with great precision. The torque, of Greco-Scythian style and weighing over 260 grammes, was found in 1830. It encircled the neck of a chieftain in a 4th century B.C. grave in the Crimea.

Photo L. Tarassova © Aurora Art Publishers, Leningrad

hilt and scabbard unearthed in 1763 in the Elizavetgrad (Kirovograd) kurgan in the Ukraine, and the gold-handled sword and axe from the Kelermes kurgans in the Kuban region, excavated in 1902.

All these objects combine Scythian motifs (reclining deer) with ancient Eastern imagery (the holy tree with its attendant divinities and fantastic animals), and it is probably correct to consider that they are imitations of Urartean artifacts, modified by the addition of elements in purely Scythian style.

Attempts have been made to relate the birth of Scythian art to the period of Scythian campaigns in Asia Minor, but this theory is disproved by the examples of Scythian and pre-Scythian art discovered in Siberia, which pre-date those from Ziwiyeh (i. e. 7th century B.C.), but are also decorated in the animal style.

The term "Scythian" is nowadays applied to a large number of ethnically unrelated tribes, characterized by a strong Iranian influence in their personal and place-names. Its application is frequently limited to the tribes inhabiting the coastal flatlands of the Black Sea region.

But archaeologists have shown that the early Scythian monuments of this region are related to ancient steppe cultures which go back as far as the middle of the second millennium B.C. In this article the term is used in a broader sense, including in the "Scythian" world a vast mass of tribes sharing the same economic and cultural existence and spread over a much wider area.

From the sixth to the third centuries B.C., the steppelands between the Don, the Volga and the Urals were the home of a culture similar to that of the Black Sea Scythians. The bearers of this culture, whom the Greeks called Sarmatians, were in turn linked with the tribes of Eastern Kazakhstan, whose own culture is brilliantly represented by a series of gold plaques depicting reclining deer, found in the sixth-century Chiliktinsky kurgan.

These links stretched beyond the steppes of Kazakhstan still further, to the High Altai, whose frozen burial mounds have yielded perfectly preserved collections of objects made of wood, bone, felt and metal, in which Chinese, Iranian and Scythian influences are clearly apparent.

The development of Scythian culture in the lands north of the Black Sea was certainly affected by the trading colonies which the Greeks had established on the coast at the end of the seventh century B.C., but the Greeks themselves had already encountered Scythians whose culture owed nothing to outside influences, and the objects which their goldsmiths made specially for Scythian customers can be easily distinguished from purely Scythian artifacts. Objects of both types are now familiar to us, as a result of excavations.

The excavations which inaugurated the systematic study of Scythian antiquities took place at the Kul Oba kurgan near Kerch, on the straits connecting the Black Sea to the Sea of Azov, in 1830. A stone vault under the mound proved to contain a rich burial of the fourth century B.C. with an outstanding collection of Greek-made jewellery. Some of the pieces, including a gold torque decorated with figures of Scythian horsemen, had obviously been made specially for Scythian customers.

Of particular interest is a spherically-shaped vase made of electrum (a natural gold-silver alloy), the body of which is decorated with four groups of figures illustrating a Greek legend of the founding of the Scythian dynasty, which Herodotus also recorded.

The scenes on the vase (analysed in detail in an article on pages 15 and 16) depict the efforts of the three sons of Heracles (the Scythian Targitaus) and a strange serpent-woman ▶

Photo Lee Boltin © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

WARRIORS AND LIONS figure on this splendid 4th century B.C. gold comb from a Scythian tomb at Solokha, on the lower Dnieper, in the Ukraine. The group of combatants and the five crouching lions beneath them are worked in relief on both sides giving the illusion of being sculptured in the round. One warrior has been unhorsed and his mount lies helpless on the ground. The three bearded warriors are Scythians, but the Greek goldsmith who made the four-inch wide comb added Greek elements to the work, including the helmets and the armour (see also article page 15).

goddess to decide which of them shall lead the tribe, by being the first to bend a bow left with their mother by their father. Two of the brothers fail the test, collecting in the process nasty injuries typical of clumsy bowmanship, but Scythes, the youngest, succeeds.

Excavations of a great number of kurgans in the coastal steppes around the Black Sea, in the Crimea and in the Northern Caucasus, during the last half of the nineteenth century, brought to light a number of magnificent examples of specifically Scythian art, and of Greek craftsmanship commissioned by the Scythians.

Typical Scythian motifs were the reclining deer with branch-like antlers and the panther, which possibly served as tribal symbols. These animals decorate the solid gold plaques on shields found in sixth-century kurgans in the Kuban region; they were also regularly depicted in the decorations on quivers.

Links between the Scythians and their western and southern neighbours are clearly reflected in the finds from the kurgans. Scythian burials in the Ukraine have yielded a number of Thracian objects, an outstanding example of which is the silver-trimmed bridle found in the Khomina Mogila kurgan in 1970, whose decorations include intricately engraved plaques depicting animal heads.

The contents of the Chertomlyk kurgan, excavated by I.E. Zabelin, included a silver vase—later to become famous—decorated in relief with figures of Scythian horse-breeders, and an iron sword whose gold hilt, depicting two calves' heads and a hunting scene, is a splendid example of Iranian decoration of the fifth century B.C.

This sword, which was possibly a trophy from the Greco-Persian or Scytho-Persian wars, was in a gold scabbard of Greek manufacture depicting a battle with the Persians, similar in composition to the scenes of the Battle of Marathon which decorate Greek temples of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.

Iranian (Achaemenid) objects were no rarity in Scythian burial mounds. One of the several burial crypts of the Great Bliznitsa kurgan on the Taman peninsula, excavated between 1864 and 1868, contained two interesting objects of Near Eastern origin : an Achaemenid seal-ring of gold showing a king wrestling with a lion; and an Egyptian amulet in faience depicting the head of the god Bes—a diminutive figure with the face of a monster and a headdress of feathers or palm-fronds. This amulet could have arrived via Iran, like the Egyptian alabaster vessel with hieroglyphic and cuneiform inscriptions mentioning the name of the Achaemenid king Artaxerxes discovered in the southern Urals.

Scythian culture thus reflects the relations with neighbouring and distant lands which contributed to the establishment of the link between Eastern Europe and the Far East, the wide east-west corridor which was already open in the middle of the last millennium of the pre-Christian era and which, until the sixteenth century A.D., would form the famous Silk Route leading from the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, through Iran, Central Asia and Chinese Turkestan to the banks of the Hwang Ho river. The world of the Scythians fully deserves its place in ancient history.

■ **Boris B. Piotrovsky**

ANTIQUITY'S GREAT REPORTER-HISTORIAN AMONG THE SCYTHIANS

modern archaeology confirms the stories of Herodotus

Upper frieze on this gold and silver wine amphora, surmounting the plant and animal motifs on its sides, shows Scythians capturing and hobbling wild horses. The vessel was unearthed at Chertomlyk near the river Dnieper (U.S.S.R.), one of the major centres of Scythian civilization. Like many other gold and silver artifacts found in the Ukraine, this 4th-century-B.C. amphora was probably made by an artist of the Greek colony on the Kerch Peninsula, in the Black Sea. These Greek craftsmen were well acquainted with the tastes and customs of the Scythian nomads.

Photo L. Tarassova © Aurora art publishers, Leningrad

by
Yaroslav V. Domansky

AROUND the middle of the 5th century B.C., a young man named Herodotus left his native city of Halicarnassus in Asia Minor, and began the travels that were to take him from the western Mediterranean to Mesopotamia.

Vast distances lay ahead of him, separating many different lands and peoples : through the Aegean to the islands of the Archipelago and the towns of the Peloponnesus; eastwards to Babylon; westwards as far as Sicily; southwards to Egypt and the banks of the Nile; northwards through the Balkan peninsula to Thrace. And one day Herodotus arrived in Olbia, one of the most northerly of the Greek city-colonies, on the shores of the Black Sea.

Founded a century-and-a-half earlier on the estuary of the river Bug, Olbia was thriving, and fully living up to its name ("olbia", in Greek, meant "prosperous").

But although he was usually curious about everything, neither Olbia's present nor its past particularly interested the young man from Halicarnassus as he stood on the city walls. He was looking outwards, over the vast plain which stretched away into the distance.

Somewhere out there, beyond the horizon, lived the Scythians, the people who, after an exhausting war, had finally humiliated Darius, king of the Persians.

The Greeks themselves had resisted the Persian invaders for many ▸

YAROSLAV VITAL'EVICH DOMANSKY, *a leading Soviet historian and archaeologist, is a senior member of the staff of the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad. An authority on the antiquities of the region north of the Black Sea, about which he has written a number of works, he has excavated many sites along the lower reaches of the river Bug in the Ukraine.*

years, and it was Herodotus' ambition to write the history of that war. Obviously, the Scythians must come into the story.

There were a great number of people in Olbia who had spent their lives in the steppes, who had travelled the length and breadth of the lands north of the Black Sea, and who had many a tale to tell about the world of the Scythians, so different from that of the Greeks.

Herodotus was an attentive listener, and the contrasts with the way of life which he had known at home fascinated him. He wanted to write about all things unusual, leaving nothing out, and so he collected all these tales—including the unlikely ones—from his Greek and Scythian informants, one of whom, a certain Tymnes, had actually been a man of confidence of the Scythian king Ariapeithes.

What Herodotus saw for himself in Olbia, and what he heard, formed a colourful patchwork picture of the Scythian world and Scythian ways, in which the past and the present, the important and the insignificant, the possible and the highly improbable jostled for space, and which he would incorporate in the pages of his History.

Thus, the first record of its kind, by the man who has been called the "Father of History", would contain an account of one of the first peoples identifiable by name to have inhabited what is now part of the Soviet Union.

Herodotus was in Olbia in or about the year 450 B.C. Five years later, he was reading parts of his manuscript to the citizens of Athens, who were so impressed that they offered him a grant of money to continue with his project.

Let us listen with them now to the words of the narrator: "Their land is level, well-watered, and abounding in pasture"... "Having neither cities nor forts, and carrying their dwellings with them wherever they go; accustomed, moreover, one and all of them, to shoot from horseback; and living not by husbandry but their cattle, their waggons the only homes that they possess..."

Thus Herodotus describes the nomadic life of the Scythians, roaming in hordes over the "vastness of the great plain" between the Danube and the Don, women and children in the waggons and the men on horseback, ready at any moment to defend their families and their herds with their spears and with the bows and arrows which they handled with such skill.

Being "entirely bare of trees", the land of the Scythians was "utterly barren of firewood." They stuffed their meat, haggis-wise, into the stomach of the animal, and cooked it in cauldrons over a fire made with the animal's own bones. In

A PLEDGE OF BROTHERHOOD

Like many pieces of Scythian jewellery, this gold ornamental plaque for clothing reveals a custom among the nomads of the steppes. It shows two Scythians making a pledge of everlasting brotherhood in a ritual also described by Herodotus. They kneel nose to nose, their profiles joined together, and hold a single horn-shaped vessel in which they have mingled drops of their blood with wine. The symbolism whereby two become one is also reflected in the conception of the plaque: when the two profiles are viewed in close-up (see enlarged detail, opposite page) they form a single face. This technique of "split representation" is relatively common in Scythian animal art (see colour photo page 28) but is rarely found applied to the human face. A remarkable example of the Scythian goldsmiths' virtuosity, this 4th century B.C. plaque is less than 4 cms. high.

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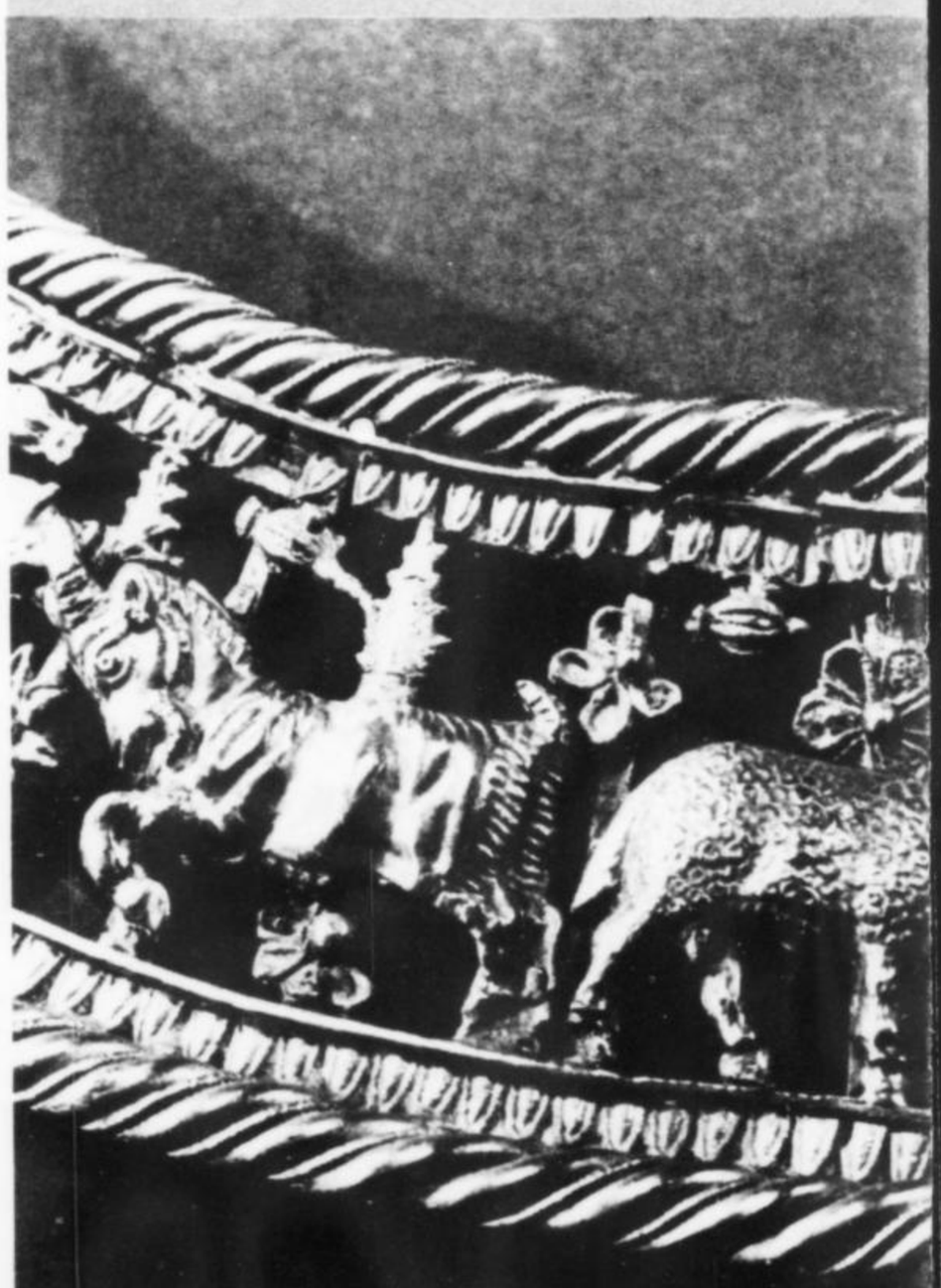
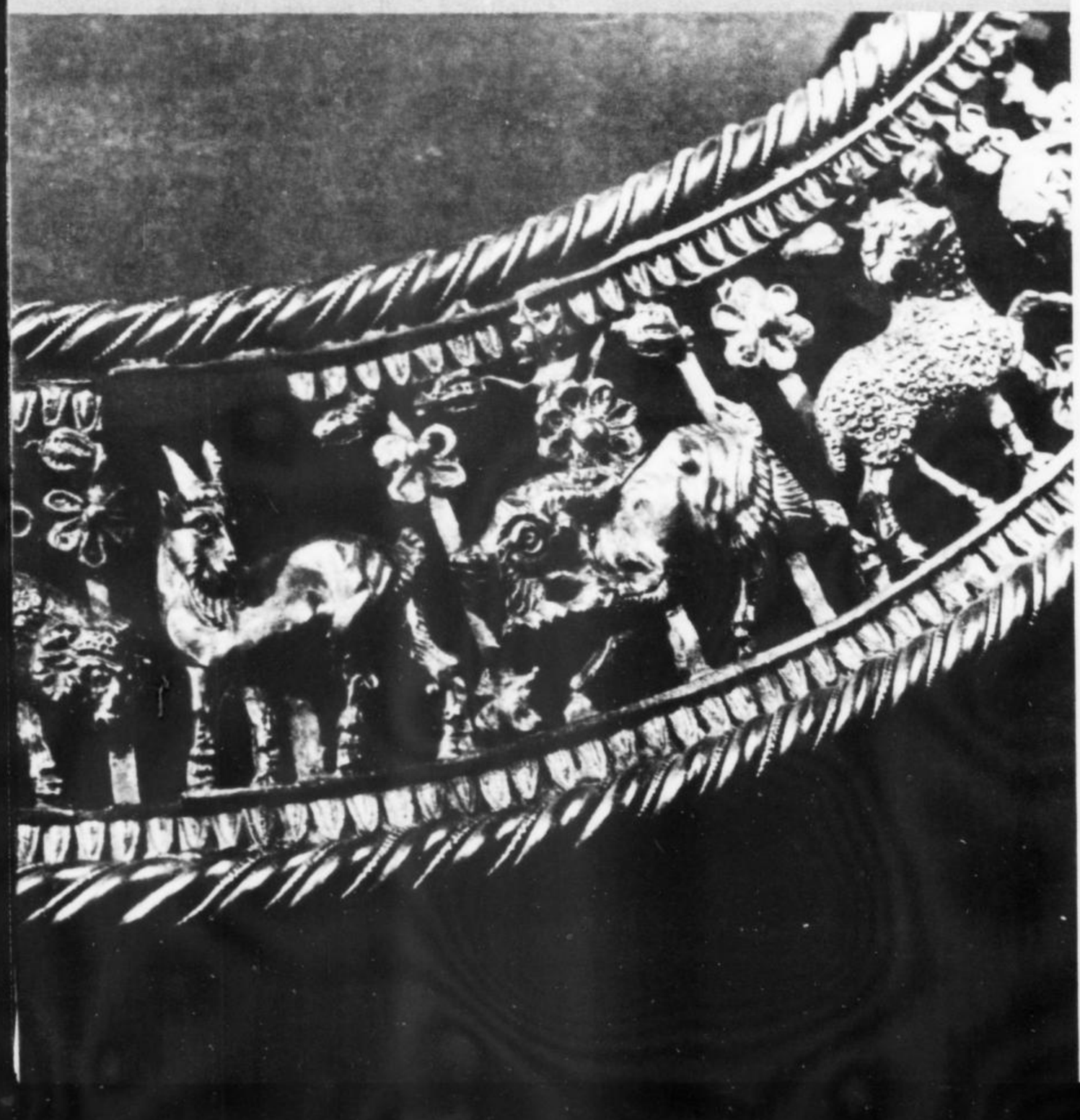
PASTORAL PROCESSION



Mountain goats and rams frisking between flowers and palmettes bordered by two twisted cords of gold (below) evoke the pastoral life of nomad herdsmen who roamed the steppes 2,500 years ago in an endless quest for water and pastureland. Detail shown here is the central motif of a gold pectoral (breast ornament) unearthed in 1868 in a burial crypt of the Great Bliznitsa tomb near the Sea of Azov. This masterpiece was considered a matchless example of Scythian jewellery until 1971, when an even more splendid princely pectoral of similar style was discovered (see page 19).



this way comments Herodotus, "the ox is made to boil himself, and other victims also do the like."

Drinkers of mare's milk, the Scythians were also copious quaffers of imported wine, which they never diluted with water. "Serve us in Scythian style!" called the Greeks, when the drink was flowing merrily.

True children of the steppe, the Scythians were born herdsmen, although like their ancestors they also hunted wild animals. Herodotus was mainly concerned with the nomads, but he also noted that some Scythians were "engaged in husbandry".

"Abundantly provided with the most important necessaries", they were favoured with a land watered by many rivers, including the Borysthenes (the Dnieper) which, he tells us, "has upon its banks the loveliest and most excellent pasturage for cattle; it contains abundance of the most delicious fish; its water is most pleasant to the taste; its stream is limpid... the richest harvests spring up along its course."

This sounds idyllic, but the life of the Scythians was in reality a hard one. Their manners and customs reflected a cruel age, and the "Father of History" has left a detailed description of the Scythians at war.

As pitiless with their enemies as they were loyal to their friends, they set great store by ritual oath-taking. Parties to a treaty shed some of their blood into a bowl filled with wine, and then plunged into the mixture "a sword, some arrows, a battle-axe and a spear, all the while repeating prayers", after which the allies each drank from the bowl.

Herodotus noted with particular interest that the Scythians were not much given to the use of "images, altars or temples", but he listed their gods, identifying them with their Greek equivalents and mentioning their role in the order of things.

Tabiti, whom the Greeks knew as Hestia, protected the household. Papaeus (Zeus) was—"very properly, in my judgement", comments Herodotus—in charge of celestial affairs, while his wife Apia dealt with more earthly matters. The Greek god Heracles, known to the Scythians as Targitaus, was believed to have been the first man ever to live in their country, the father of their people.

The Scythians sacrificed domestic animals, and horses in particular, to all these gods, as well as to Ares, the god of war, the only divinity in whose honour they erected altars, in the form of huge piles of brushwood topped with antique iron swords. The sacrificial victims included not only cattle and horses, but also one out of every hundred of their prisoners of war.

Scythia had "an abundance of soothsayers, who foretell the future

by means of bundles of willow wands". When the king fell sick, it was their task to identify the traitor whose false oath by the king's hearth had caused the illness, and who was promptly beheaded. In doubtful cases, the king sought a second opinion; if the accused man was acquitted, the unfortunate soothsayers lost their own heads.

The Scythians were convinced that there was a life beyond the grave, picturing it as a continuation of what had gone before. Herodotus gives us a detailed description of the royal funerals, when elaborate preparations were made to ensure that the king lacked nothing in his after-life.

After digging a deep, rectangular grave, the Scythians placed the embalmed body of their king on a waggon, and took it on a royal progress from tribe to tribe. The mourners mutilated their own ears, cropped their hair, lacerated their arms, forehead and nose, and thrust an arrow through their left hands.

Returning to the grave, they lowered the king into the ground on a litter, which they surrounded with a fence of spears. Then they built a ceiling of beams over the tomb, and thatched it with a roof of twigs.

In the open space around the king, they buried one of his concubines, first killing her by strangling, "together with his cup-bearer, his cook, his groom, his lackey, his messenger, some of his horses, firstlings of all his other possessions, and some golden cups..." Finally, says Herodotus, "they set to work, and raise a vast mound over the grave, all of them vying with each other and seeking to make it as tall as possible."

But this was not the end of the affair. A year later, fifty of the late king's attendants were strangled and impaled on the backs of fifty slaughtered horses. Firmly attached to stakes and arranged in a circle, this ghostly guard of honour was left to protect the burial mound.

Every Scythian was bound to respect his gods, and betrayal was severely punished. In Olbia, Herodotus heard the cautionary tale of Scylas, son and heir of the Scythian king Ariapeithes, who "disliked the Scythic mode of life, and was attached, by his up-bringing, to the manners of the Greeks." Scylas had installed one of his wives, "who was a native of the place", in a large house in Olbia, and when he visited the city, as he did frequently, he dressed in Greek clothes and followed the Greek customs and rites, even joining in the Bacchanalian revels, which the Scythians considered offensive.

Seeing him the worse for wear, some kinsmen of Scylas told tales at home, and the ensuing indignation led to a revolt against Scylas, who was obliged to decamp to Thrace.

But he soon fell into the hands of his successor on the throne, and was beheaded without further delay. "Thus rigidly do the Scythians maintain their own customs," wrote Herodotus, "and thus severely do they punish such as adopt foreign usages."

The Scythians fascinated Herodotus in many ways, but there was one matter in particular, to which he frequently referred, in which they had, he considered, "shown themselves wiser than any nation upon the face of the earth... The one thing of which I speak, is the contrivance whereby they make it impossible for the enemy who invades them to escape destruction, while they themselves are entirely out of his reach, unless it please them to engage with him."

Herodotus' tale of the Scythians contains a wealth of historical, geographical and ethnographical material. His colourful account of the campaign of Darius is embellished with digressions which are irrelevant to the main theme, but which reveal the extent to which posterity is indebted to the "Father of History" for its knowledge of the ancient world and, more particularly, of the structure of Scythian society.

Herodotus could obviously not have been expected to foresee that this subject would be of such interest to future historians, and to give the matter more than a passing glance, but his casual approach has—it must be admitted—placed his successors in a very difficult position.

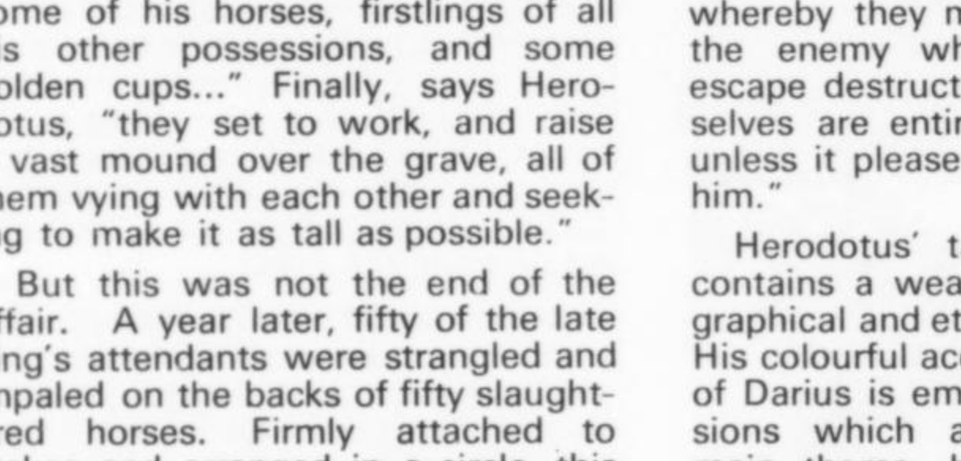
So much of what he wrote about the Scythians remains open to different interpretations, and controversy continues to bedevil any attempt by modern scholars to understand his writings and to relate them to other sources.

According to Herodotus, the structure of Scythian society was tribal, and it is clear that ancient tribal links could, on occasion, provoke united action by all the kinsmen. But this bond had lost its earlier, all-embracing significance, and the patriarchal family had become the basic social unit. The customs of the Scythians reveal a male-dominated society, under the authority of the chief, with women in a position of dependence.

Scythian society was not egalitarian, but on the contrary, relatively class-ridden. Although most Scythians were free men, irrespective of personal power or wealth, there was also a slave class, whose existence and activities are described by Herodotus, as well as a property-owning and aristocratic minority, composed of the leaders of the richest families, the royal entourage and the warrior chieftains, all under the supreme authority of the king.

Scythia was ruled by tribal alliances. At the time of the Persian invasion under Darius, at the end of the sixth century B.C., it was divided into three kingdoms, under the overall command of Idanthyrsus who had virtually unlimited power, whether in the conduct of military affairs, the distri-

ELEGANT HOUSEHOLD UTENSILS



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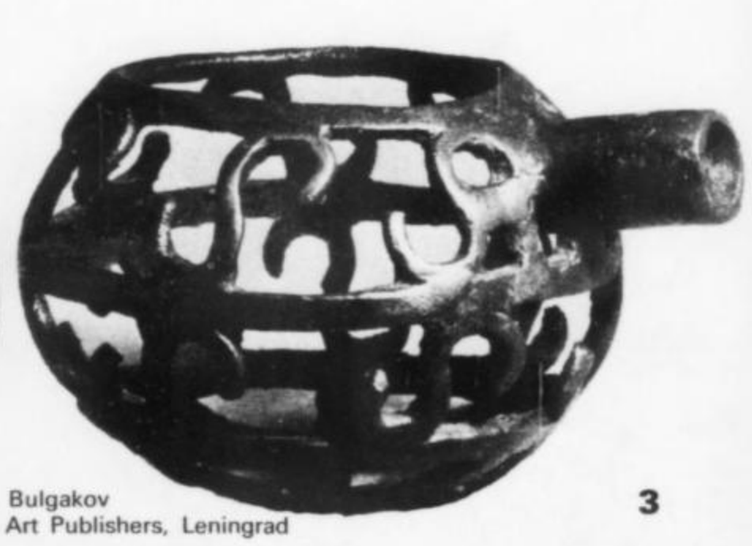

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3

WHAT THE WELL-DRESSED HORSEMAN WORE

How Scythian horsemen of 2,500 years ago dressed and the kind of equipment they used is now known to the last detail (drawing right). This knowledge came with the discovery of a remarkably preserved set of accoutrements buried with a 5th-century-B. C. warrior in a Ukraine tomb (below). The conical helmet complete with earflaps, the leather back-piece covered with metal scales, the sword-belt of bronze plaques and the breast-plate had all survived. Some of this equipment is depicted on a stone stele of the same period (left) as well as a long sword, a sheathed dagger, a rhyton (horn-shaped drinking cup) and a gorytus (quiver for bow and arrows). The warrior's outfit also included leg armour laced to trousers which were tucked into flat-soled felt boots.

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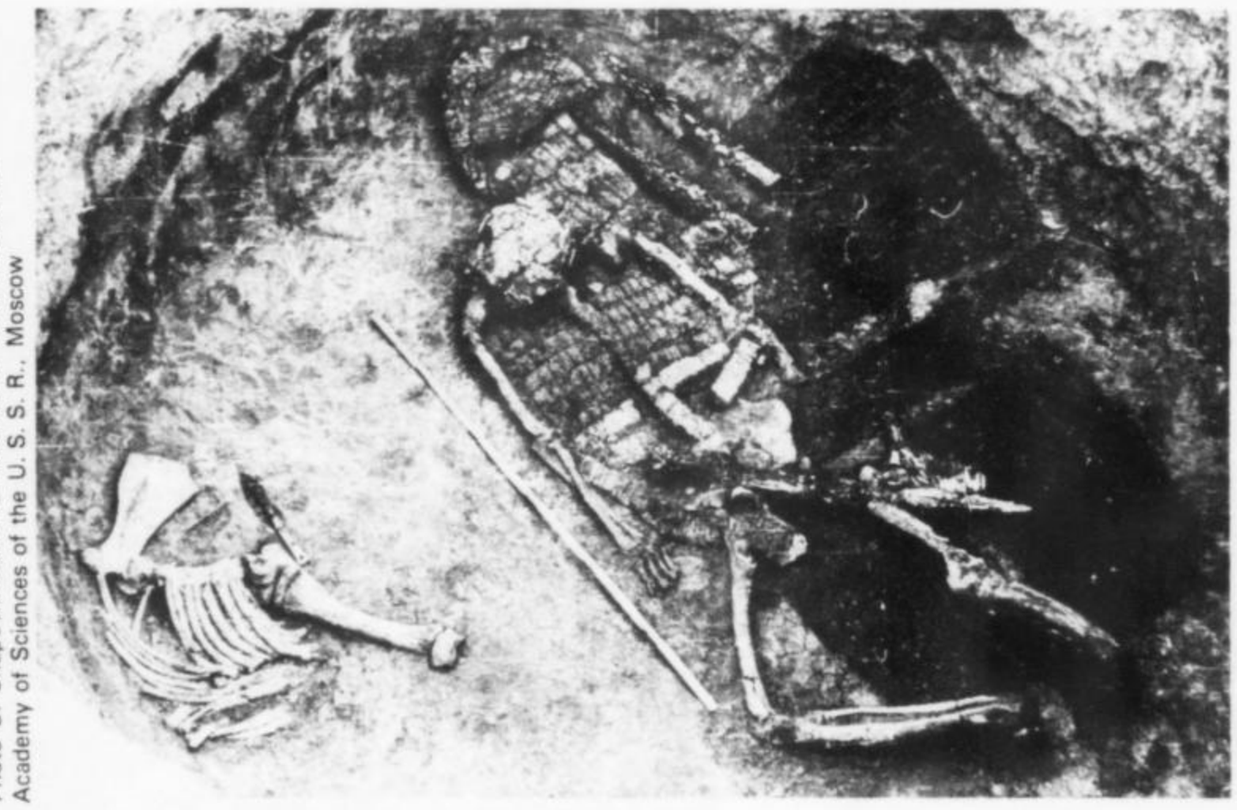

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Drawing Michael Garelik © Institute of Oriental Studies. Academy of Sciences of the U. S. S. R., Moscow

bution of booty or the destiny of individual Scythians, who could be pressed into service at will and whose disobedience was punishable by death.

We have already seen the fate reserved for those who betrayed their oath at the hearth of the king. In anticipation of the king's own demise, a substantial stock of sacrificial material, including slaves as well as horses and precious objects, was kept handy.

The Scythian king was above all a military leader. War, as a source of prosperity, enabling the aristocrats to acquire riches and wealth, was a regular activity, and the life of the Scythians, who were constantly in arms, was permeated with martial arts, traditions and customs.

This mass of warriors was capable of bending the sovereign's will. A primitive form of democracy from earlier times survived, for example, in the assemblies which united all the men-at-arms in discussion of matters of importance and which—as was probably the case of the unfortunate Scylas—could decide the fate of the king himself.

Scythian society was full of contradictions. With the exception of one or two excursions into the past, Herodotus was writing about events in the middle of the fifth century B.C., a chapter of Scythian history which was to be followed by many others. It was a period of change in all respects, but the old ways of life had not been entirely abandoned, and would leave their imprint on all that came afterwards.

Altogether, the Scythians occupied the stage of history for some thousand years, about as long as Ancient Rome, living through a series of experiences which left no trace behind them. But the little that we do know reflects a dramatic destiny, full of variety and conflict.

There is no doubt that in the seventh century B.C., the Scythians were the scourge of the East. In 612 B.C., they had joined in sacking the Assyrian capital, Nineveh. Three hundred years later they were to suffer defeat at the hands of Philip of Macedon.

In the sixth century, they had confirmed their independence by routing Darius and his Persian army; at the end of the second century, the Greeks were to rout them in battle after battle in the Crimea.

At the dawn of their history, they had mounted almost unbelievable raids as far as Egypt; as the sun set, they would be confined to a small area of the Crimean steppe, the horses on which they had ridden so proudly throughout their history exchanged for the tools of farmers.

Originally rejecting everything that

The technical mastery with which the Scythians embellished even their everyday objects is seen in their cauldrons, knives, perfume braziers, lamps, amphoras, jars, stools and a variety of other elegantly wrought utensils. The three objects shown at left are about 2,500 years old :

1 — Bronze lamp to hold six wicks (11 cms. high).

2 — Bronze mirror (18 cms. diameter) with fluted handle topped by a panther.

3 — Bronze meat-strainer or sieve used for lifting boiling meat from the pot. A wooden stick was inserted in the hollow handle.

reflected Hellas, they were finally to mingle with the crowds in the Greek trading-cities of the Black Sea coast.

Warriors who had smashed everything that lay in their path, they would value artistic creation, and become outstanding craftsmen themselves.

And when, in the third century A.D., Scythia and the ancient Scythians had ceased to exist, the once-terrible name remained, and was adopted by those who occupied their former territories, including the early Slavs.

Silence fell over the Scythians for fifteen hundred years. And then, at the turn of the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries, the past became the future, as their monuments began to speak. All manner of Scythian relics awaited the spades of the archaeologists; the time was rapidly approaching when the truth of Herodotus' tales could be put to the test.

The study of Scythian antiquities began soon after the lands north of the Black Sea became Russian territory. Since then, a great number of monuments have been investigated, among the most important of which are the famous burial mounds, or kurgans.

Many of these mounds marked the last resting-place of chieftains or kings, and proved to be complex constructions in the form of crypts or catacombs, containing a great variety of objects. Some of them had been plundered long ago, but what the robbers had rejected was of the greatest interest to the archaeologists.

The inventory of everyday objects is a long one, and includes bronze cauldrons and earthenware utensils; gold rings, bracelets, necklaces, pendants and ornaments for the head; costume jewellery in metalware (usually stitched to the garment); swords, battle-axes, spears, arrows, quivers, scabbards and armour; harness for horses and ritual articles.

Various materials were used in their production, ranging from gold, bronze and clay to iron, silver, bone and stone. The objects themselves came from a variety of sources, some of them being of local manufacture and others imported from abroad—honestly purchased, looted by raiding-parties or obtained through trade with other tribes.

Excavation on the whole confirmed Herodotus' account of life in the steppes, at least as far as its material aspects were concerned, and justified his claim to be considered as the founder of historical science.

With one or two inaccuracies or omissions, what the archaeologists discovered in the royal tombs matches his descriptions of the funerals of kings. The bronze cauldrons which they unearthed correspond to those in which, according to Herodotus, the Scythians boiled their meat, and if they found quantities of wood-ash, ashes from the hearths of at least one settlement indicate that bones did on occasion replace firewood.

In 1830, a new page was turned in the history of the study of Scythian antiquities when excavations began at the Kul Oba kurgan near Kerch, on the straits between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. Among the many objects brought to light was a unique collection of articles which have attracted the attention of scholars ever since.

Under the mound was a stone crypt containing three bodies, buried in the fourth century B.C., together with a quantity of gold artifacts decorated in a manner never seen before and depicting scenes in the life of a warrior people whose clothes, headgear and general appearance in no way resembled those of the Greeks.

A solid gold torque was decorated with figures of horsemen, and gold ornaments sewn to the clothing of the dead people were embossed with figures of bowmen firing arrows, riders brandishing spears and soldiers with quivers and bow-cases attached to their belts.

Who were the warriors portrayed in these scenes? The immediate opinion of the archaeologists who had unearthed these objects was correct. They were Scythians, drawn, as it were, "from life".

For the first time, scholars whose only acquaintance with an ancient people had come through the pages of Herodotus and other writers found themselves face-to-face with Scythian realities. What did they look like? How did they arm themselves? What did they wear? How did they behave? The answers were there, before their very eyes.

Kul Oba was only the first in a series of burial mounds to yield metal objects portraying the Scythians. In 1862, excavations began in the extraordinary Chertomlyk kurgan near the Dnieper, which produced a gold and silver vase decorated with a frieze of sculptured human figures and horses similar to those found on objects from Kul Oba, and which is generally considered to depict the horse-breeders and horse-breakers of the Scythian steppes.

In 1912-1913, the neighbouring Solokha kurgan, which was also a royal tomb, produced further objects decorated with scenes from Scythian life, including a golden comb portraying Scythian warriors in battle.

We have mentioned only a few of the most significant discoveries made in the late nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries and illustrating the "Scythian theme" in ancient art. The most immediate impression which they leave is one of artistic and technical perfection. The golden comb referred to above, for example, is composed of a number of finely-

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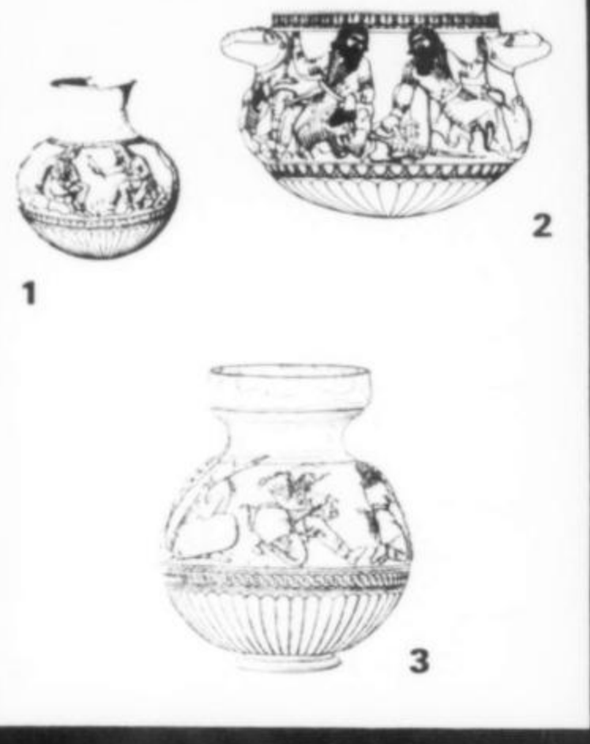


1 2

3

Three vases recount the legend of King Targitaus

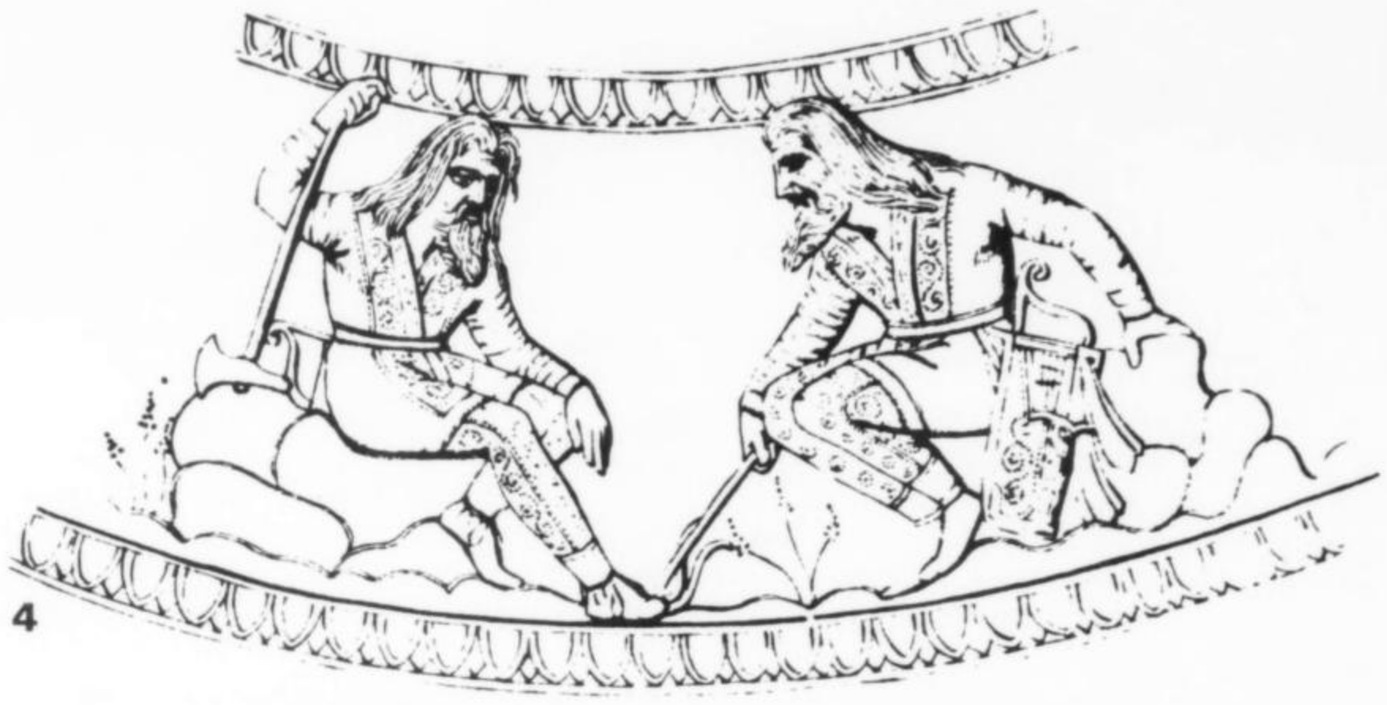
by
Dimitri S. Raevsky

DIMITRI SERGEEVICH RAEVSKY, *Soviet archaeologist, is engaged on research at the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the U. S. S. R. in Moscow. He has written many studies on the history and culture of the Scythians and is the author of a book on Scythian mythology, as it has been recreated on the basis of archaeological data and descriptions by authors of Antiquity, to be published in 1977.*

IN the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C., Scythian artists and Greek artists who had settled in the Scythian territories began to provide the local Scythian nobility with beautiful pieces of craftsmanship made according to the tastes of their patrons and incorporating many subjects and motifs.

Did these motifs merely depict scenes from everyday life or were they themes of greater significance? Professor Boris N. Grakov, a leading Soviet authority on Scythian culture, has affirmed that the content and style of these scenes are too specific for them to be merely representations of everyday situations. He sees them as possible representations of Scythian myths.

By comparing these portrayals with the information given us by Classical authors, we should be able to reconstruct Scythian mythology.



4

The story of the first Scythian king, Targitaus, and his three sons depicted on a frieze encircling a silver vessel (drawing no. 1, opposite page) discovered in the north of Kuban. The old king converses with his eldest son (4) and bids farewell to his second son (5) who, holding two spears in his right hand, is about to set off on a journey. To his beardless youngest son Targitaus proffers his bow, symbol of authority (6).

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6

Photo L. Tarassova © Kiev State Historical Museum

Herodotus relates the Scythian legend of the first hero, who was known to the Scythians as Targitaus, but whom the Greek colonists of the Black Sea region, and Herodotus also, referred to as Heracles, the famous hero of Greek myth.

At the beginning of the 1950s, Professor Grakov put forward the interesting hypothesis that the numerous Scythian representations of a man fighting with a fantastic beast all depict the exploits of Targitaus.

Professor Grakov also claimed that such works were popular among the Scythians because Targitaus, according to Herodotus, was considered to be the direct ancestor of the Scythian kings. Is it possible, then, to identify features in Scythian art which directly relate to the myth of Targitaus?

According to one version of this legend, Targitaus-Heracles had three sons. In order to determine which of them was the most worthy of becoming the ruler of the Scythians, he decided to put them to a test. Each had to attempt to string his father's bow and strap on the belt which he wore in battle. This trial required, as may well be imagined, great strength and skill, and only the youngest of the brothers, Scythes, succeeded. According to the legend he then became the first ruler of the Scythians and his two older brothers were sent into exile.

This subject is depicted in an astonishing number of works of Scythian art. At the beginning of this century a small ritual silver vessel (drawing 1) which clearly originated from the Black Sea area, was found in a tomb along the course of the Don.

Six male figures are represented on this vessel, grouped in three paired scenes. One of the figures reappears in all three scenes. He is an elderly Scythian with long hair and a beard.

In one of the scenes (4) he is represented in conversation with another Scythian. Another scene (5) is more important: the same character bids farewell to a warrior who holds a spear in each hand and may be setting off on an expedition to distant lands.

But it is the third scene (6) which seems to be the most significant of all: the same hero proffers his bow to his companion, who is clearly the youngest person in the group—he has not yet even grown the customary Scythian beard.

All the details of this composition seem to indicate that it is a representation of Targitaus and his three sons. Two of them he is exiling from his realm. Targitaus even holds up three fingers to the departing warrior, as if to remind him that all the brothers had been subjected to the test. Meanwhile he proffers his bow to the third and youngest son as a symbol of his victory and as an emblem of his power.

A few years ago, during the excavations at Gaimanova Mogila in the Ukraine, a vessel (drawing 2, page 14 and photo page 17) was found showing another young Scythian taking an oblong object from the hands of an older man. Unfortunately that part of the vessel (drawing 7, page 16) was seriously damaged and the object cannot be made out.

But the content of the scene and the appearance of the characters make it possible for us to see here the very moment at which Targitaus hands his bow to his youngest son. On the opposite side of the vessel are two other Scythians, who may well be the victor's exiled brothers.

Now let us turn to the most renowned Scythian ritual vessel (3). ▶

7

Drawing of circular frieze (left) embellishing a gilded silver cup less than 10 cms high (drawing n° 2, page 14, and photo opposite. Unearthed at Gaimanov (Ukraine), it dates from the 4th century B.C. At far right of drawing are two long-haired, bearded men dressed in Scythian fashion. At centre left an old man is offering something to a younger one. This scene may be a variant of the legend of the Scythian king Targitaus.

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of the Academy of Sciences of the U. S. S. R., Moscow

Made of gold and 13 cm high, it was found almost a century and a half ago in the Kul Oba kurgan on the Kerch Peninsula in the Crimea.

A frieze encircles the vase, representing seven Scythians, busy at different occupations. One of them is kneeling on his right knee, his left leg over a bow, stretching it, while he strings it with the right hand and holds it steady with the left. This may be a representation of the feat that Targitaus asked of his sons.

If this is so how can we interpret what is happening in the other scenes on the vase? One Scythian is bandaging the wounded leg of another. Beside him, another Scythian is probing for something with his thumb and forefinger in the mouth of his companion. The explanation of this somewhat unexpected scene is as follows.

When unstrung, the Scythian bow is curved at both ends in the opposite direction from the bow-string (in the form of a cursive letter "w" with a hook on each end). If the archer attempts to draw it tight in the manner indicated on the vase, but does not have the necessary strength and dexterity, the wood can spring back violently, wounding him by a blow either on the left leg or the lower jaw.

The force of the backlash is such that it may be capable of breaking a bone and could certainly dislodge a tooth. Perhaps Targitaus's older sons received these wounds, through not being able to carry out their father's test. Is this what we see on the vessel from Kul Oba?

What did the Scythians imagine happened to Targitaus's older sons? Herodotus does not tell us, but world folklore recounts numerous versions of the rivalry between three brothers, in which the youngest is victorious. These versions differ in many details but usually have the same ending: the older brothers, enraged by the younger's success, slay him.

This is how the story ends in the narrative of the three sons of Fereydun, the hero of an ancient Iranian epic, whose general characteristics resemble those of the Scythian Targitaus.

The scene shown on the Gaimanova Mogila vase described above suggests that the end of the Scythian myth may be very similar. The two persons who represent, according to our interpretation, the elder brothers are heavily armed, while the youngest brother and the father have only bows. Has the artist not portrayed here the precise moment when the two brothers hatch their murderous plot against their victorious rival?

Another renowned Scythian treasure is the gold comb (4th century B.C.) from the Solokha kurgan, in the lower Dnieper River region (see photo page 8). Two Scythian warriors, one on foot and the other on horseback, are attacking and vanquishing a third one. Could these also be the sons of Targitaus?

A Roman poet, Caius Valerius Flaccus (Ist century A. D.) confirms this theory in his poem "The Argonautica."

In the midst of items which have nothing to do with the myth, he suddenly mentions a combat between two individuals whose names are very similar in sound to those of Targitaus-Heracles' sons. His description of the combat also evokes that represented on the comb: the warrior's horse is dead, he himself is wounded, death will soon overtake him...

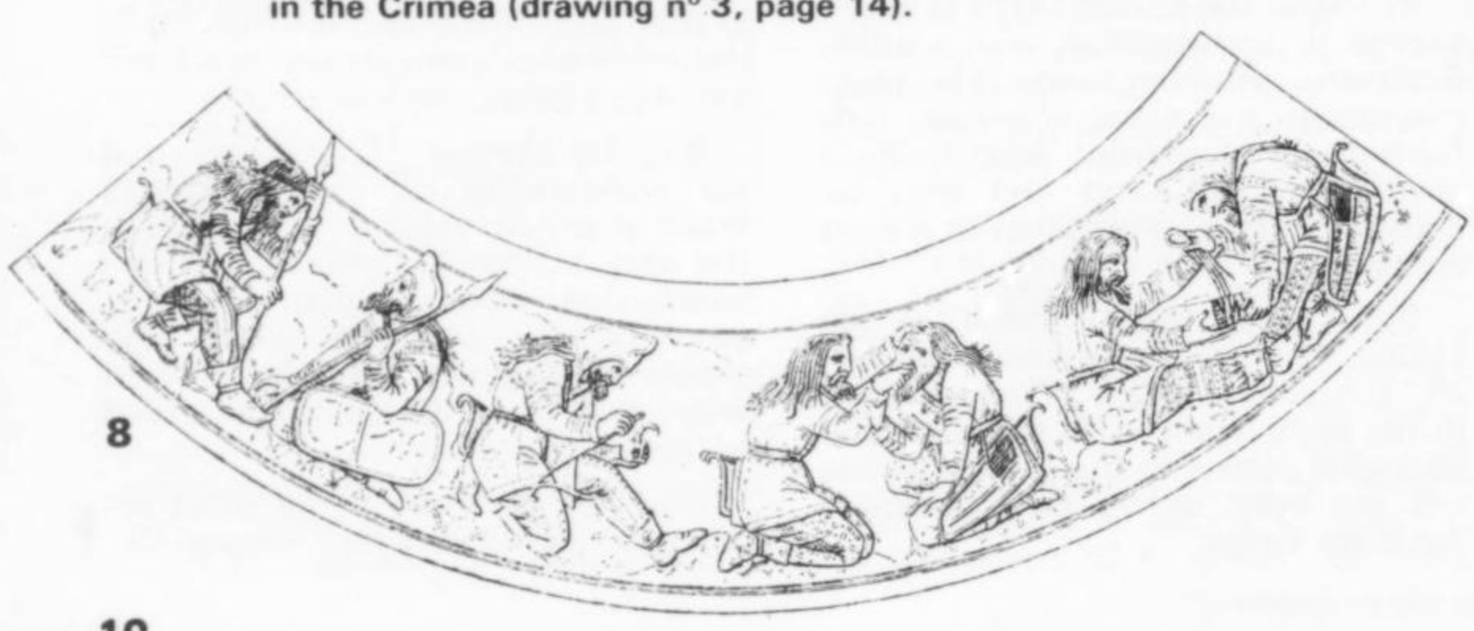
Thus, such artistic representations make it possible to link together the fragments of Scythian myths preserved by different authors and to reconstruct on this basis a single connected narrative.

The popularity of the legend of Targitaus and his sons and the frequent enactment of this subject on ritual objects should not surprise us. After all, this was a dynastic myth, which supported the Scythian kings' claim to the throne.

However, it must be admitted that these interpretations are still not unanimously accepted, and that there are other possible explanations and approaches to this subject. Meanwhile the search for the truth continues...

■ **Dimitri S. Raevsky**

From right to left: a Scythian wearing a pointed helmet bandages his comrade's leg. Another seems to be acting as a dentist, probing in the mouth of his companion. Yet another is stringing his bow, a task said to have been given to the sons of Targitaus. Two more figures seem to be gossiping while they lean on their spears. The drawing depicts a frieze decorating an electrum (gold and silver alloy) vase discovered at Kul Oba in the Crimea (drawing n° 3, page 14).



8

1 Four Ukrainian archaeologists present their latest finds

IN the steppes of Eastern Europe large earthen mounds mark the burial places of ancient Scythian rulers. These royal "kurgans" were in most cases plundered in antiquity by thieves in search of the hoards of gold hidden within the tombs.

For the first time, during the past six or seven years, systematic excavations of Scythian kurgans have been carried out on a large scale, using the latest scientific methods, by expeditions from the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian S. S. R.

Undertaken in connexion with extensive land improvement projects in the south of the Ukraine, the research on the royal tombs has aroused tremendous interest. Although they were first excavated in the 19th and at the start of the 20th century, and had been pillaged in ancient times, the tombs were still found to contain an astonishing wealth of treasures.

The many objects unearthed include remarkable pieces of jewellery, ornately decorated weapons, gold and silver vessels and other outstanding works of ancient art. They have now become part of the world's cultural heritage.

Among the best known of the royal kurgans dating from the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. are those of Chertomlyk, Solokha, Oguz, Alexandropol', Kozel, Bol'shaia Tsymbalka and Chmyrev, all situated in the Dnepropetrovsk, Zaprozhye or Kherson regions of the Ukraine. The famous kurgan of Kul Oba, near Kerch, in the Crimea, can also be included among these tombs by virtue of the wealth of objects it contained.

On the following pages, Ukrainian archaeologists present a few of their most recent discoveries.

Ivan Artemenko
Director of the Institute
of Archaeology of the
Ukrainian Academy of Sciences

2 – the golden cup of Gaimanov

DURING 1969-70, the Gaimanova Mogila kurgan, which occupies a central position among more than 50 burials of Scythian warriors, was excavated and studied by an expedition from the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian S. S. R. Gaimanova Mogila is situated near the village of Balka in the Vasil'ievska district of the Zaporozhye region.

In comparison with the other kurgans, which are about 1 to 1.5 metres high, Gaimanova Mogila is remarkable for its size—over 8 metres high and about 80 metres in diameter. Its enormous size, its sharp outlines against the flat steppe landscape and its gleaming white stone facing emphasized the exceptional importance of the individual buried in it.

Gaimanova Mogila served as a burial vault for Scythian royalty, and the funeral objects discovered in it correspond in many details to the customs associated with the burial of Scythian kings as described by Herodotus. We found golden and silver vessels, the attributes of Scythian royal power, cups, horns for wine, a drinking bowl, a pitcher, and the bodies of those servants who, according to Herodotus, were buried with a king.

However, Gaimanova Mogila's fame as one of the most valuable historical monuments of Scythia is not solely due to the extremely rich finds of eating and cooking utensils and the several thousand excellent pieces of jewellery. The most important discoveries were the objects buried in the cache of the northern tomb. These included golden and silver ritual vessels, as well as three

wooden cups with rolled gold discs along the rim; also in the cache were a flat silver drinking cup and two drinking horns, with silver bases and golden mouths and tips in the forms of the head of a ram and a lion. These objects were accompanied by silver pitchers and a round drinking-bowl placed in a gilded silver vessel.

With the exception of the large drinking horn and the wooden cups which are the work of a local Scythian craftsman, the remaining objects in the cache are made in the style of Greek art of the 4th century B.C. and show clear links with the jewellery workshops of the Bosphorus.

The most outstanding work of Scytho-Classical art found in the Gaimanova Mogila kurgan is a small spherical gilded silver cup, with two flat horizontal handles decorated with rams' heads. The central design on the cup is a wide frieze in high relief, depicting Scythian warriors.

The warriors stand against a background showing an open, stony area and are connected with each other by their involvement in common activities. They are superbly integrated into the form of the vessel. The four major figures are displayed in pairs on the surface of the cup; the other two kneel under the cup's handles. [For an interpretation of these figures on the golden cup of Gaimanov see article page 15].

On one side of the cup stand two elderly warriors, engaged in conversation. Long-haired and bearded, they are dressed in rich clothing and carry ceremonial precious weaponry. Their long kaftans, with triangular gussets, are trimmed with fur and embroidered on the shoulders and chest with fantastical designs. Their hairstyles are highly distinctive, and their weapons in particular betoken the highest authority. The mace of the warrior on the right and the two-thonged whip held by the one on the left, suggest that the two men belonged to the elite of Scythian leaders.

On the opposite side of the cup an elderly bearded warrior and a young Scythian are conversing. Their clothing is just as luxurious, their weapons just as costly, but their poses are somewhat different. The young Scythian holds in his right hand a ritual drinking-bowl, and his left hand is outstretched, like that of the elderly warrior. Under one handle of the vessel, a youth on his knees is prostrating himself before a wineskin, while the kneeling figure under the other handle is an elderly warrior, with his gorytus (the combination quiver and bow-case typical of the Scythians) beside him. He has one hand stretched up to his forehead and is gripping something with the other.

All the figures are gilded, and only the faces and hands are silver. Each image is individual in style. It is worth emphasizing that this is the first known example of Scythian decorative art depicting Scythian leaders of the highest rank.

Vasily Bidzilia
Institute of Archaeology
of the Ukrainian Academy
of Sciences

Photo © Art Publishers, Moscow

3

Scythian idyll on a royal breastplate

Photo © APN, Moscow

On this gold pectoral or breastplate (right) the artist has depicted scenes in minute detail making this masterpiece of the goldsmith's art (30 cm. in diameter) a vivid portrayal of Scythian pastoral life. At centre of upper frieze of the pectoral (detail left) two men on their knees are holding and sewing a sheepskin tunic. They wear the typical trousers and boots of the nomad horsemen of the steppes. This 4th century B.C. Greco-Scythian pectoral was wrought near the Black Sea and was discovered in the Ukraine in 1971 in a Scythian ruler's tomb.

THE excavations in 1971 of Tolstaya Mogila, one of the most magnificent royal tombs of Scythia, turned out to be a momentous event for archaeology. In the centre of the tomb was the burial of the ruler himself, with beside him two pits for the burial of horses and the three tombs of his leading grooms. In the south-western part of the kurgan two dark patches marked the entrances to a side tomb, which had escaped plunder.

In this tomb lay the skeleton of a young Scythian woman, probably the wife of the ruler. All her clothes—her dresses, veils and sandals—were embroidered with ornamental golden discs. Her jewellery was of gold.

Beside the woman was an alabaster sarcophagus containing the body of a child who had died later and had been carried into the grave through a separate entrance. The whole of its tiny skeleton was also covered in golden plaques, rings, bracelets and neck ornaments.

Everything was in a perfect state of preservation when, 2,300 years after the burial, the first archaeologists entered the grave. But although the central grave had been plundered, in it were found the objects which were to make Tolstaya Mogila world-famous. These were the most precious of the king's ceremonial emblems of authority: a sword covered in gold, a gold-wrapped whip, and, most spectacular of all, a golden pectoral, or breastplate.

The pectoral weighs 1,150 grammes. Its crescent-shaped surface is divided into three bands by broad elegant twisted cords of gold.

In the centre of the lowest band three scenes show a horse being attacked and pulled down by griffins. Beyond them are depicted the combats of a wild boar and a deer with a leopard and a lion, and at each end of this band a hound chases after a hare. In front of each hare two grasshoppers face each other—eternal symbols of peace and tranquility.

The middle band is decorated with plant motifs and among the wonderfully interwoven flowers, shoots, palmleaves, rosettes and leaves, five lifelike figures of birds evoke the atmosphere of a quiet sunny morning.

Linked with the lower band into a single picture, the middle band forms a kind of interlude between the large-scale sculptural figures on the lower and upper bands and gives the whole work its unity as a great symphonic poem about Scythian life and ideas.

In the upper band, four Scythians go about their peaceful tasks surrounded by domestic animals. In the centre two men, stripped to the waist, their quivers and bows close at hand, are sewing a sheepskin tunic. To the left and right of them a cow and a mare suckle their young and further on two youths are milking ewes. Birds in flight complete the composition, communicating an impression of the infinity of the world.

With its perfect proportions and the outstanding beauty and naturalness of its movements, each figure is a sculptural masterpiece. An extraordinary composition, the work as a whole undoubtedly has a complex symbolic meaning. But, quite apart from its true significance, it seems clear that in this work the artist was striving, directly or indirectly, to convey a philosophical picture of his world, with all its aspirations and its dreams.

For the first time, we see on a ritual royal object neither battle scenes nor noble warriors, but a vista of earthly life in all its harmony.

Such a find was unprecedented in the field of Scythian studies. It reflected, as a drop of dew does the sun, the full brilliance and radiance of royal Scythian gold, much more of which has been found at Tolstaya Mogila than in Kul Oba, previously the richest Scythian tomb ever excavated.

Yet the importance of these finds lies not in the gold, but in the priceless historical revelations that come from every object in the Tolstaya tomb and the imperishable artistic value of its most exquisite works.

Boris Mozolevsky
Institute of Archaeology
of the Ukrainian Academy
of Sciences

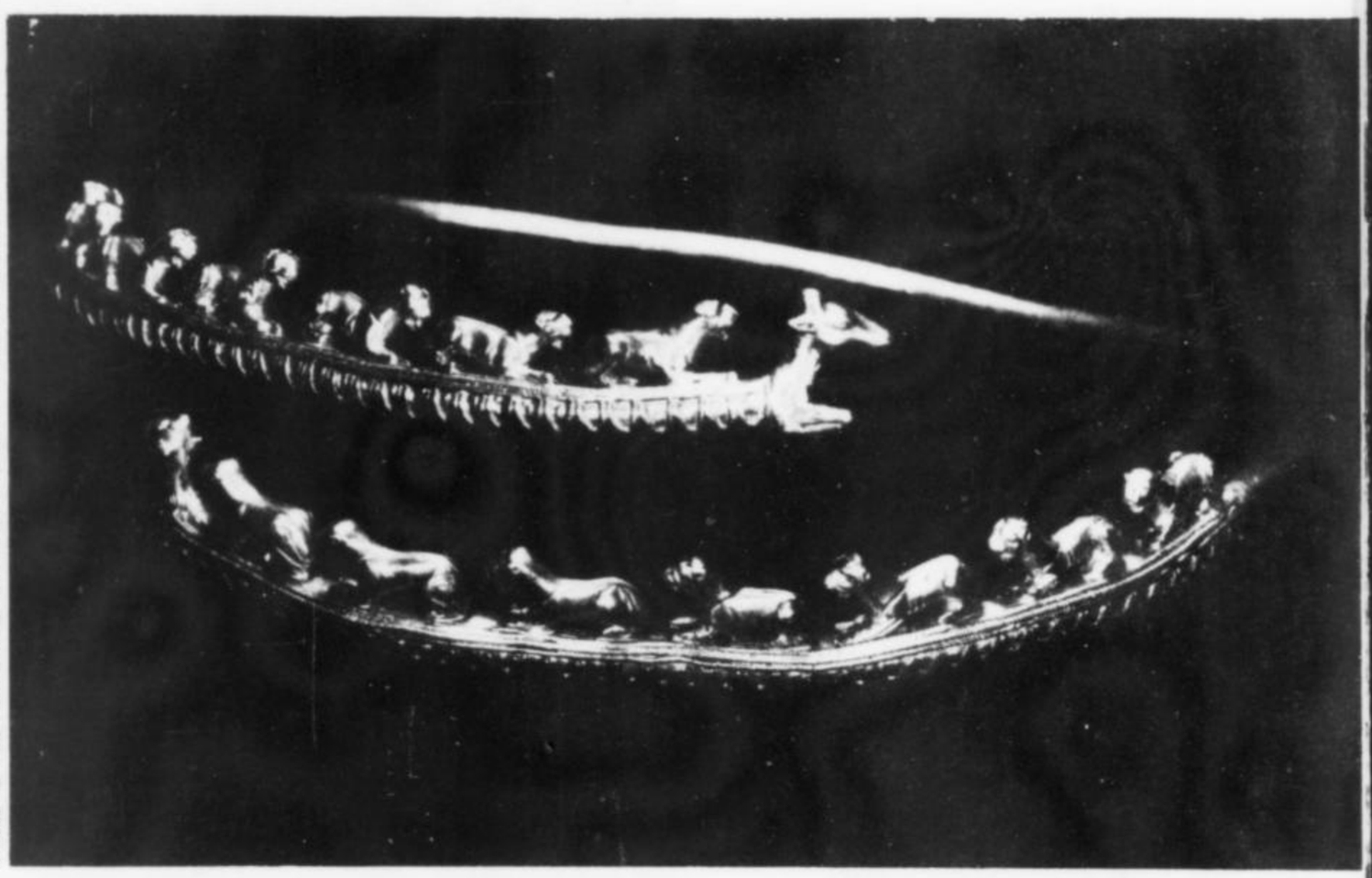


Photo © Art Publishers, Moscow-Kiev State Historical Museum.

DEER-STALKING LIONS. Each end of this solid gold neck-ring is decorated with seven lions stalking a deer whose hindquarters merge into the decorative pattern on the neck-ring. This ornament belonged to a Scythian noblewoman buried 2,300 years ago with all her jewels. It came to light in 1971 in the same tomb as the magnificent pectoral shown on page 19. The tomb was robbed but both objects were missed by the plunderers.

Photo L. Tarassova © Kiev State Historical Museum.

ENIGMATIC GRIFFIN. Bronze ornament (left) in the form of a stylized griffin may have surmounted a staff, a ceremonial standard or the decoration of a catafalque. Discovered in 1971, it dates from the 4th century B.C. and is only 5 cms. high.

WELL-TRAVELLED BOAR. This gold boar with silver tusks may have been the base of a wine-cup. The wild boar was a cult animal for the Celts and this work was probably made by a Celtic craftsman in Central Europe in the 4th century B.C. Its discovery in the Ukraine is evidence of the trade links that existed in ancient times between the Scythian world and its Western neighbours. Unearthed in 1970, the boar is 5 cms. long and weighs less than 20 grammes.

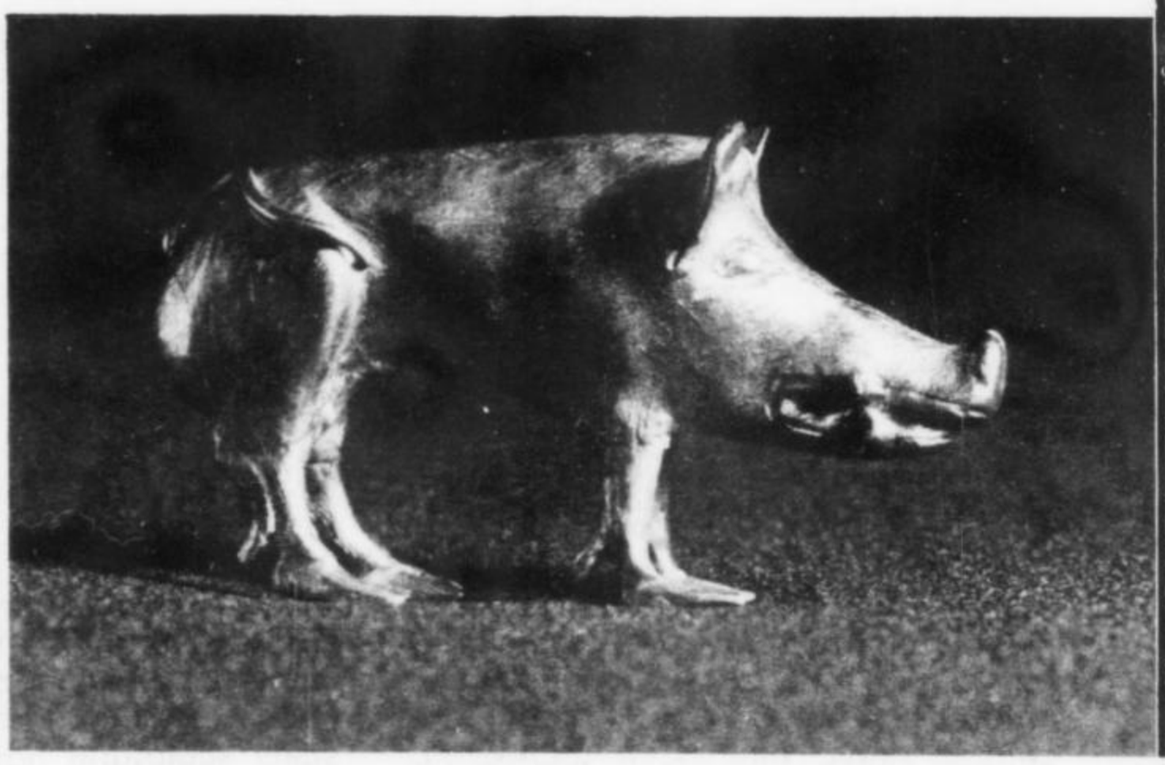


Photo L. Tarassova © Kiev State Historical Museum.

SCYTHIAN PANOPLY. Carved in limestone 2,500 years ago, this statue is the full-length portrayal of a Scythian warrior in helmet and armour (see also box page 13). From his belt hang the typical short Scythian sword (the akinakes) a quiver for bow and arrows (the gorytus), a battle-axe and a sheathed dagger. He is wearing a neck-ring and in his right hand he grips to his breast a rhyton, a horn-shaped drinking cup. The 2-metre-high statue may originally have topped a burial mound. It was found near the Black Sea in 1975 by archaeologists of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukraine.

Photo © V. Kloshko, Kiev

4
a horse's finery capped by a goddess of the chase

A 2,400-year-old Scythian ornament of singular beauty and originality was recently unearthed in the Ukraine (the first photo of this work ever published appears on the centre colour pages of this issue).

The ornament, a horse's gold bridle piece, came to light when the undisturbed grave of a man and two horses was uncovered at the end of a corridor. The discovery was made by two specialists in the archaeology of Early Iron Age cultures, I. P. Savovsky and Yu. V. Boltrik, who were directing excavations at the village of Giunovko in the Kamenskoye-Dnieper district of the Zaporozhye region.

A man of about 25 lay by the wall of the passageway. The small number and modest nature of the objects near him (a gold ear-ring, an iron bracelet, glass beads and a bunch of arrows) showed his subordinate position in society: he was most probably a groom. The horse buried by the opposite wall was also modestly decorated: the archaeologists found an iron bit and the fastenings of a bridle.

In comparison, the decoration of the second horse, lying in the middle, was striking in its magnificence. It consisted of a bridle frontlet in the form of a lion, two cheekplates showing a lion pulling down a deer, four phaleras, or discs with running spirals, and two plaques without decoration. All the objects were of gilded silver.

The horse's head was crowned with a flat top-piece. This was painted blue, with a leather base, and had a delicate segment-shaped gold plaque (33 cm by 20 cm) stuck to it.

The decoration on this "diadem for a horse" is new for Scythian art. A woman rider is firing arrows at a stag under a tree which is crowned by two enormous stylized flowers with red-coloured outer petals.

Plant shoots are visible under the feet of the horse and the stag, and plant motifs dominate the scene. The antlers of the stag are intertwined with the branches of the tree and a wide border of plant ornamentation—wavy shoots with whorls sprouting ▸

LATEST UKRAINIAN FINDS
(Continued)

from them—frames the perimeter of the ornament. The top-piece is a miniature decorative panel in which the colourful effect is achieved by a combined use of gold, blue and red. The skilled craftsmanship has given the work an appearance of delicate gold lace.

The realism of the details in the costume of the horsewoman and her pose should not be allowed to obscure the mythological nature of the subject as a whole. The theme of the death of a stag is repeated three times in the decoration of the buried horse. On the cheekplates the stag is shown being eaten by a lion, on the gold discs it is being pulled down by a griffin, and in the top-piece it is being killed by a human.

The hunt takes place in a sacred grove in which trees and plants are highly stylized, and the whole recalls the legend of the virgin huntress of the Greeks—Artemis. This relates how the hunter Actaeon strayed by mistake into the sacred forest of the goddess in the valley of Cithaeron, where he caught sight of her bathing. As a punishment, Artemis turned Actaeon into a stag, which then became itself the prey of hunters.

The image of the divine huntress would naturally attract the Scythians, whose religion, as Herodotus tells us, underwent an intensive process of anthropomorphisation of divinities during the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. But the discovery of this hunting scene is still too recent for definitive conclusions to be drawn about its exact significance.

Vitaly Otroshchenko
Institute of Archaeology
of the Ukrainian Academy
of Sciences

1

Page 23
Golden stag's head (detail of photo on page 4) which once adorned an iron shield. Measuring 31 cms. long and 19 cms. high, the whole object weighs no less than 634 grammes. The stag was one of the most popular motifs of Scythian art.

3

Page 25
■ This small bone horse (11 cms. long) is a typical product of the ancient art of Tuva, a region in central Siberia near Mongolia where horses, reindeer and even wild camels once abounded. Perforations enabled this ornament carved between the 5th and 3rd centuries B.C. to be sewn onto a garment.

4

■ Three carnivorous beasts are locked in combat over their prey on this gold plaque which formed part of the Siberian gold treasure assembled by Tsar Peter the Great in the early 18th century. His collection consisted of solid gold objects that had escaped the plunderers of many ancient tombs.

5

■ Fabulous beast attacking a horse. The two sections of the work were originally joined by a copper plaque riveted with silver. This 2,500-year-old sword-belt buckle was once encrusted with multicoloured gems.

6

■ Curled-up panther, a masterwork of Scytho-Siberian art of the 7th or 6th century B.C., may have been a shield decoration (see also photo page 40). Solid gold, it weighs more than 220 grammes. The small central circles probably once held coloured inlays. (Collection of Peter the Great).

7

■ Wrought in hammered gold with enamel and amber inlays, this famous panther from Kelermes, north of the Caucasus, may have decorated a breastplate or shield. It is one of the oldest examples of the animal art of the steppes (7th or 6th centuries B.C.). Weight: 735 grammes; length: 33 cms.

8

■ This elaborate gold and amber work (19 cms. long) incorporates the heads of lions and rams on an intricately-wrought openwork structure. Dating from the 7th or 6th century B.C., it may have decorated a throne.

9

Pages 26-27
Our centre colour pages present a photo, published for the first time, of a gold bridle top-piece, recently unearthed in the Ukraine. It adorned the head of a horse of the steppes some 2,400 years ago. This ornament is a striking example of the finery with which the Scythian nomads decked out their steeds. Intricate decoration of top-piece, which is attached to a coloured leather base, shows a goddess of the chase hunting a stag (see article page 21). This remarkable work is now in the Kiev State Museum (Ukrainian S.S.R.).

Colour pages

SPLENDOURS OF SCYTHIAN ART

2

Page 24
Golden diadem, or *kalathos* (basket-shaped headdress) discovered in steppe-land near the river Dnieper some 200 km. north of the Black Sea. Its Greco-Scythian style is evidence of the close links between Greeks and Scythians in the 4th century B.C. The openwork plaques, originally sewn onto a cloth backing, are decorated with scenes of animal combat—a characteristic feature of Scythian art. Ornamental pendants hang from two of the plaques.

Pages 28-29
The Scythians lavished the utmost care on the details of their equipment, which was embellished by sculptors and goldsmiths with sumptuous ornaments such as those shown here.

10

Page 28
Bridle frontlet carved from a stag's antler in the 5th century B.C. by an artist from the Altai mountains (Siberia). About 20 cms. high, it joins the head of a wild beast to the gracefully curving necks of two geese. Necks, ears and curious claw-like feet are symmetrically rendered in this "split representation" of two motifs, which is a specific feature of Scythian art.

11

Page 29
■ Half griffin, half bird of prey, this gold-plated silver bridle trinket (4th century B.C.) was discovered in the Sea of Azov region.

12

■ Head of a griffin in engraved cast gold (4th century B.C.). A harness decoration, 3.5 cms. high, it weighs 50 grammes.

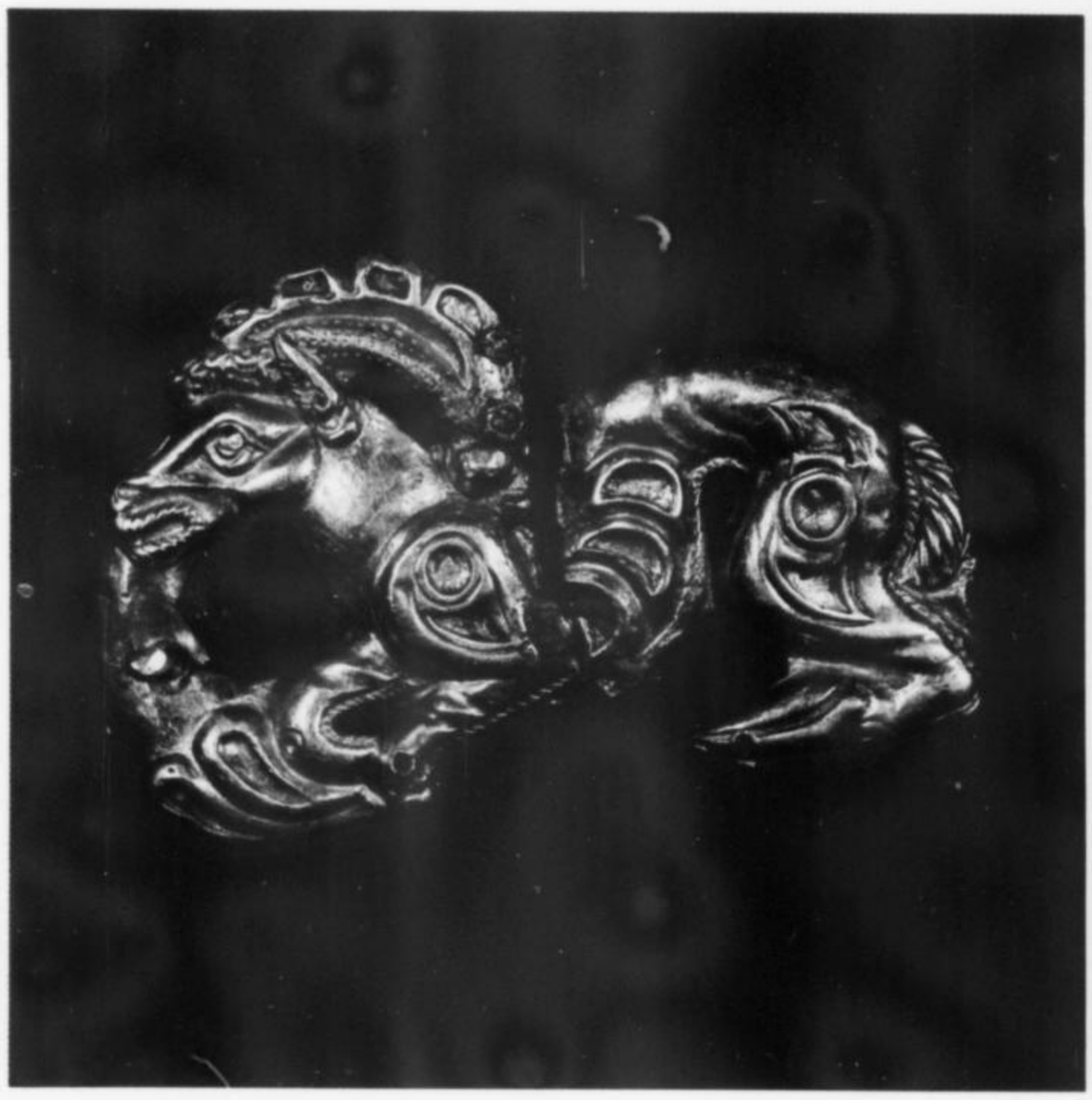
13

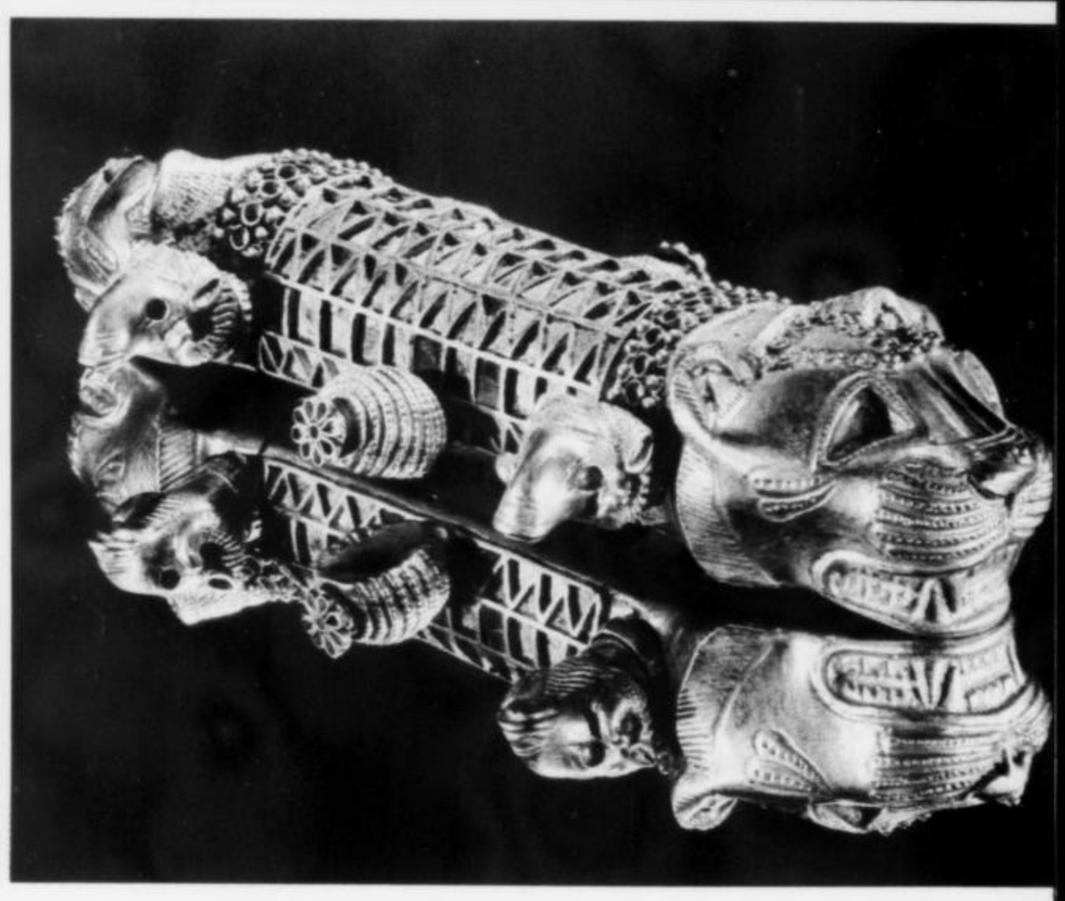
■ Bronze silhouette of the head of a bird of prey (6th or 5th century B.C.) found in the Kuban once topped a ceremonial pole. Two of the three bells originally attached to the 26-cm.-high head have survived. A mountain goat cowers beneath the looming bird.

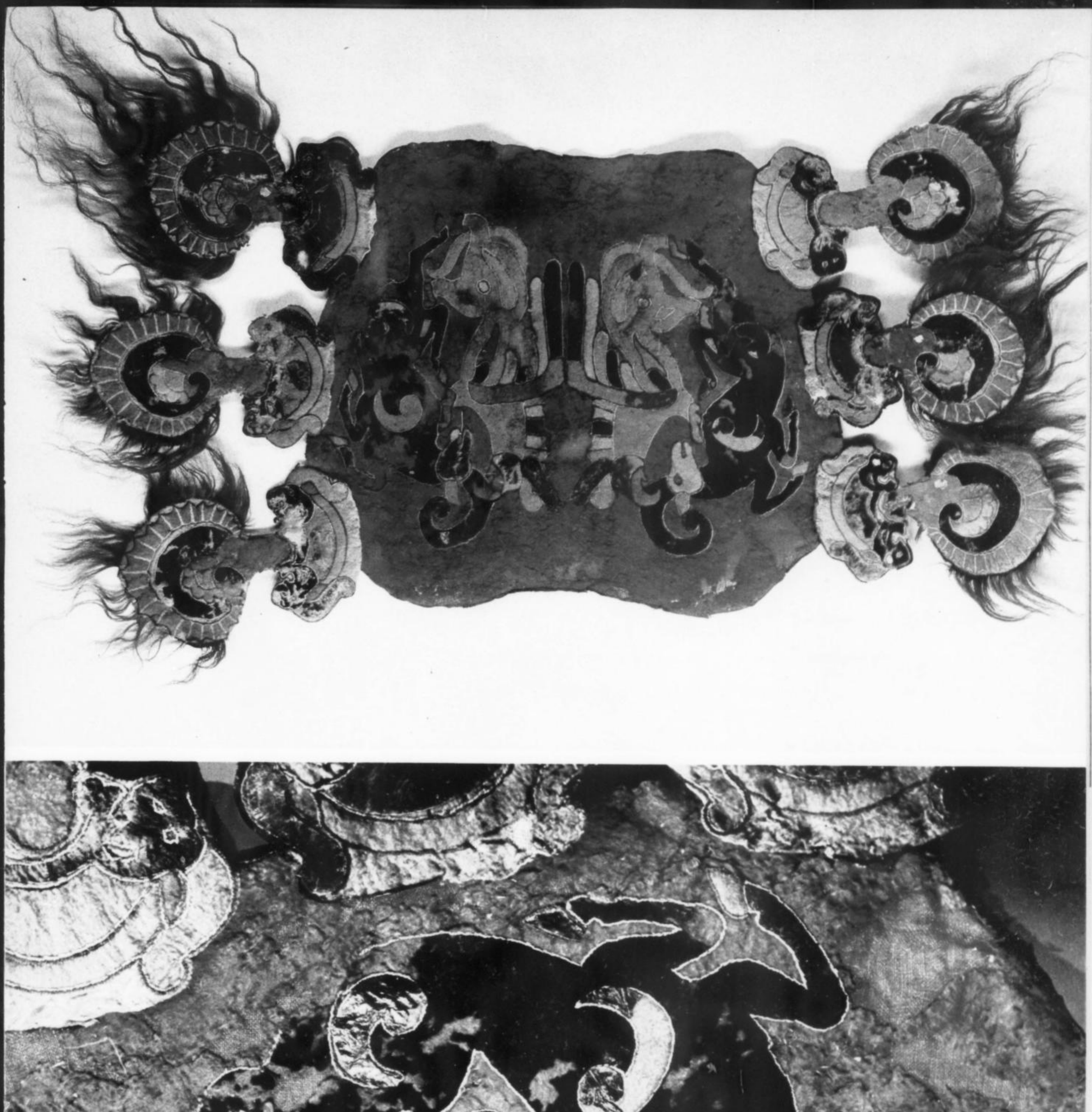
14

■ Although stylized in form, this 4th-century-B.C. bronze reindeer conveys a realistic impression of movement.

Photos n[os] 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 13 : Lee Boltin © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Photos n[os] 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14 : L. Tarassova © Aurora Art Publishers, Leningrad







PAZYRYK

a nomad way of life "deep-frozen" for 25 centuries in Siberian mountain tombs

by Mariya P. Zavitukhina

THE High Altai in Siberia is severe, majestic country. Over its steppes and mountain pastures, in the middle of the last millennium B.C., roamed the nomadic tribes which scholars have associated with the gold-guarding griffins of legend. Following their vast herds of cattle and horses, they left behind them, in the upland hollows, innumerable cairn-covered barrows known as kurgans or burial-mounds.

In 1929, two scholars from Leningrad, S.I. Rudenko and M.P. Gryaznov, began excavations in an ancient burial ground in a place called Pazyryk, 1,600 metres above sea-level in the remote Ulagan Valley, in Siberia. The explorations of the first kurgan, which proved to be frozen solid and to contain goods which would normally be called "perishable", aroused unprecedented interest.

Rudenko's return in 1947-1949, at the head of an expedition which investigated four other frozen barrows, produced sensational results. When the "refrigerated" tombs yielded up carpets, clothing and footwear, a ceremonial chariot, the mummified bodies of men and women, horses in rich trappings, utensils of all kinds, musical instruments and other objects —all of them almost 2,500 years old— the little known name of Pazyryk became world famous.

The hollows where the barrows are situated are outside the area in which the ground is permanently frozen, but the climate of the High Altai, with its low mean annual temperatures, its long and almost snow-free winters and its short summers, when the nights are still cold, led to the formation of *merzlota,* or permafrost, under the cairns themselves. Their stones protected the earth from heat in the summer, and permitted refrigeration to a depth of seven metres, where the temperature never rose above freezing point. Water turned into ice as it filtered into the tombs, whose contents, thus "deep-frozen", were in ideal conditions of preservation.

The archaeologists were faced with an unusual problem. In order to see inside the burial places, they had to lay aside their trowels, knives and brushes, and pour in vast quantities of hot water to melt the ice.

The Altaians organized exceptionally splendid burials, following customs and rituals similar to those of their kindred people the Scythians. At the bottom of a deep and roomy hole, they built a log-lined chamber with walls and ceiling of double thickness. On the floor they laid the coffins which would receive the embalmed bodies of the dead. They decorated the walls of the tomb with felt hangings, and furnished it with the personal possessions of the men and women they were burying, adding tableware, food and drink.

Outside the burial chamber they placed richly caparisoned horses, killed on the day of the funeral. They even left behind them some of the tools used in preparing the tomb: wooden shovels, picks and mallets, as well as trolleys and ladders. Then they carefully covered over the tomb with layers of birch bark and the foliage of the "smoky tea" shrub, and roofed it up to ground level with larch logs. They heaped soil on the top and then, finally, raised a cairn of stones over the mound.

Objects found in the tombs and data from radiocarbon analysis, indicate that these burial mounds were constructed in the fifth or fourth centuries B.C.

The excellent pastures and almost snow-free winters provided the Altaian nomads with year-round grazing for their herds of horses and for the herds of cattle, sheep and goats which furnished all their everyday requirements—food, clothes and shelter.

For these nomadic peoples, the horse was the principal means of locomotion. In addition to their small, locally-bred draught-horses, they possessed highly-prized and swift-footed thoroughbred fliers, gold and chestnut in colouring, of Central Asian origin. They even took these riding-horses with them into the grave.

Thanks to the excavations, we now ▶

MARIYA PAVLOVNA ZAVITUKHINA, *Soviet archaeologist, is executive secretary of the Department of History of Prehistoric Cultures and curator of Siberian antiquities at the State Hermitage Museum (Leningrad). For many years she has directed excavations of monuments from the Scythian period in the Krasnoyarsk region and is the author of many studies on Siberian archaeology.*

Colour page opposite:

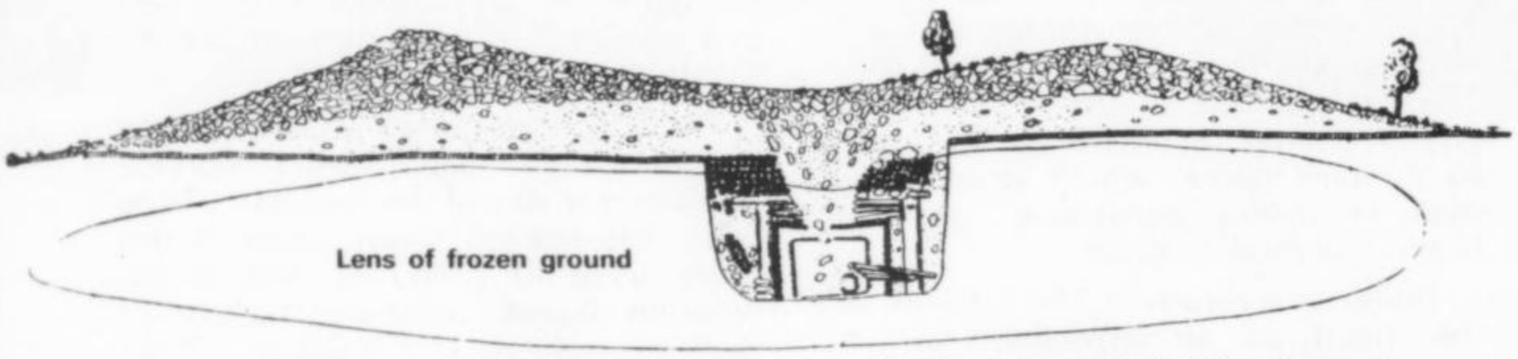
In the tombs of Pazyryk (Siberia) archaeologists have discovered clothing, wall hangings and carpets perfectly preserved for over 2,000 years beneath the frozen earth. Above left, detail of a felt saddle cover from Pazyryk; the entire cover is shown in lower photo. Its design, in coloured felt appliqué outlined with cords, shows a mountain goat attacked by a griffin; its tassels are fringed with horsehair and fur. Saddle covers cushioned the riders' thighs and were often embellished with brightly coloured animal forms or animal combats.

Photos L. Tarassova © Aurora Art Publishers, Leningrad

Photo A. Bulgakov © Aurora Art Publishers, Leningrad

TREASURES SAVED BY FROST AND LOOTERS

Rich stores of normally perishable objects, yielding priceless information about the steppe nomads, have been found almost perfectly preserved in the extraordinary frozen tombs of the Altai mountains in Siberia (6th-4th centuries B.C.). Below, cross-section of an Altai tomb in the highland valley of Pazyryk, where graves were first excavated by Soviet archaeologists in 1929. Tomb chamber shown, walled and roofed with logs, was at bottom of a pit 5 metres deep. At ground level earth from the pit was formed into a low mound topped by piles of boulders (see view of Pazyryk tombs in photo above). Cold winter air settled between the stones and eventually a lens-shaped section of ground around the burial chamber became perpetually frozen. Every human burial chamber at Pazyryk was looted by robbers who dug down and chopped through the logs (note disturbed v-shaped area of rocks and soil in cross-section). Water seeped through the opening and froze, preserving for all time the bodies of chieftains, their women, horses and possessions of fur, fabric, leather and wood, left behind by the looters. Drawing at bottom shows a Pazyryk horse burial, including trappings and wheels and frame of a 4-horse carriage.



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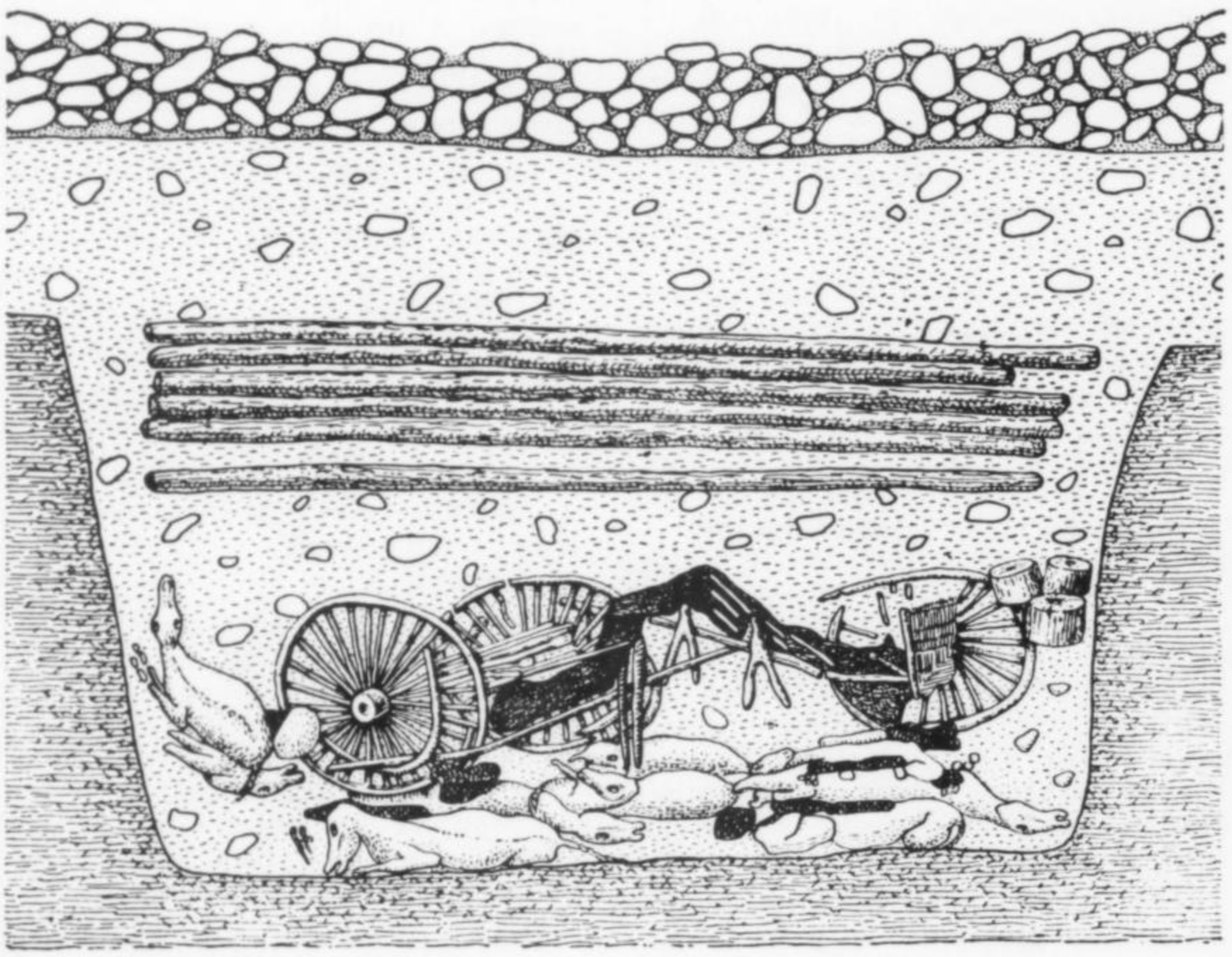


Drawing © Scientific American, New York

know how the ancient Altaians saddled up. The saddle itself consisted of two soft felt cushions, stuffed with deer hair and secured by breast- and crupper-straps which prevented it from sliding forwards or backwards. Stirrups were still unknown; they were not to come into use for another thousand years. The bridle was formed by a headstall strap attached to the bit, with side-straps, a throat-lash and a single noseband strap.

The nomads of the Altai probably lived in light, portable tents, or *yurty,* in covered wagons when they were on the move and—if the skill with which they built their burial chambers is a guide—in log houses. They used wooden and earthenware vessels, as well as leather pouches and flasks.

Their clothing consisted of skirts woven from *kendyr* or hemp fibres, caftans of fur or felt, and patchwork breeches made of soft, pliable leather. Their footwear consisted of felt stockings and high leather boots with soft soles. This costume was completed by a head-dress in the form of a tall cap with ear-flaps, and a silver-buckled leather belt. Women's clothing included coats of squirrel skin, fur inwards, with narrow, decorative sleeves, and short, fur-lined bootees, also with soft soles.

The nomads went to war with bronze battle-axes, iron daggers and bows and arrows, sheltering behind shields made from whittled sticks pleated through thin leather.

The ancient Altaians lived together in clans or tribes, with distinct classes of chieftains and property-owning nobles. The patriarch, who bore the double responsibility of stock-breeder and warrior, played a leading role in the family unit, although the matriarch was also held in high esteem. Concubines figured among the womenfolk, but probably only at the upper, property-owning levels of society, where custom demanded that the favourite, after the death of her lord and master, be strangled so that she might follow him beyond the grave.

Although the people of the High Altai lived in out-of-the-way places, far from the ancient centres of civilization, many of the objects found in their burial mounds reveal a broad network of trade and relations with other peoples, from whom they acquired precious goods: carpets, richly-woven textiles and ornaments, and the well-bred Central Asian riding-horses which they prized above all else.

The Altaians probably offered cattle and horses from their own herds, as well as furs, gold and silver, in exchange for these goods. Valuable pile carpets and woollen cloth of a distinctive style from Iran found their way through Central Asia to the Altai, whose inhabitants also obtained from their Eastern neighbours embroidered silks which

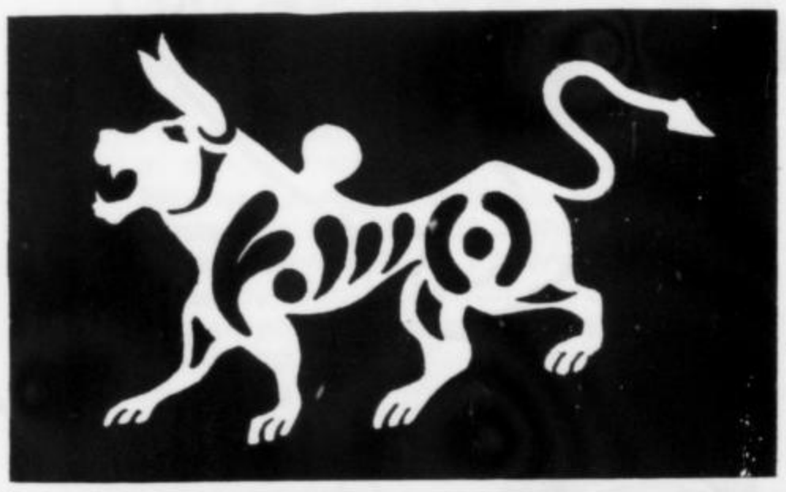
CONTINUED PAGE 36

FABULOUS BESTIARIES ON TAPESTRY AND SADDLE

Many elegant and richly worked textiles, some imported from faraway Iran and China, were found in the Pazyryk tombs, their colours still unfaded. Tapestries and felt hangings which adorned the tents of the horsemen of the steppes were dyed in vivid reds, blues, yellows and greens and often covered with elaborate designs depicting men and real or mythical creatures. A prancing winged and antlered figure, half-lion, half-human, decorates this fragment of a felt wall-hanging from Pazyryk (1). Horses had been decked out with magnificent finery before being buried with their masters. Felt saddle covers were lavishly decorated with ornaments, mostly depicting exuberant scenes of animal combat. (See also colour photos page 30.) Drawings below show four animal motifs embellishing Pazyryk saddle covers; the silhouettes were all cut from leather, partly coloured and covered with gold leaf or tinfoil: (2) Lion with massive head and fanged open jaws; (3) Eagle-griffin pecks fiercely into the neck of a lion-griffin; (4) A griffin grips an elk in its talons; (5) Mountain ram with tiger tearing at its throat has collapsed onto its forelegs with its crupper twisted round. (See also pages 34 and 35.) Its body is slashed with stops, commas and half-horseshoes, a technique vividly used by the Altai artists to indicate the principal muscles and ribs.

1

Photo A. Bulgakov © Aurora Art Publishers, Leningrad. Drawings from *Frozen Tombs of Siberia* by Sergei I. Rudenko © J. M. Dent and Sons, London 1970.



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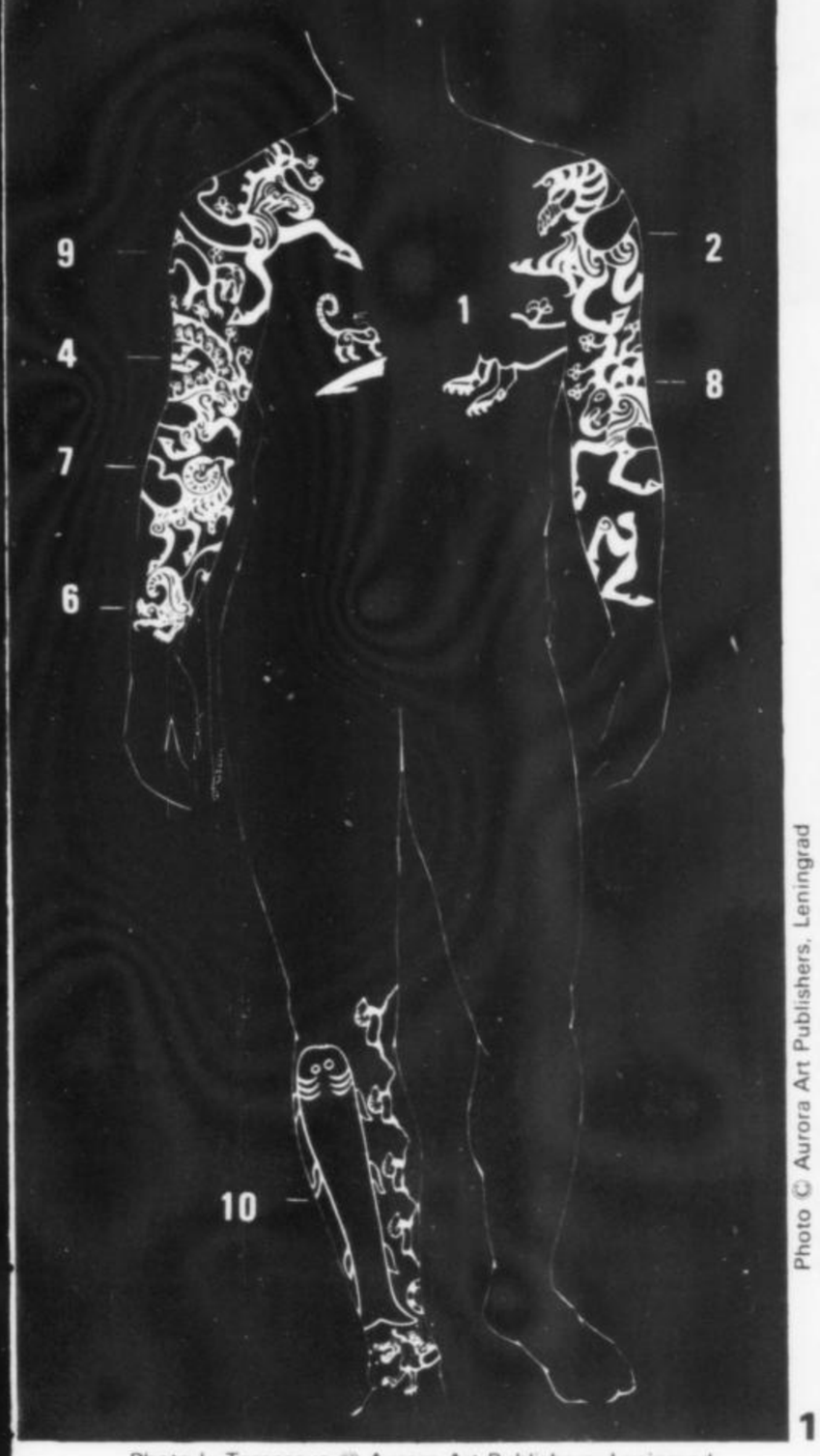
Cavorting creatures on the tattooed man of Pazyryk



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Drawings from *Frozen Tombs of Siberia* by Sergei I. Rudenko © J. M. Dent and Sons, London 1970.

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One of the most exciting and puzzling discoveries made at Pazyryk was that of the embalmed body of an elderly chieftain who had been covered in intricate tattooing long before his death. A mass of real and imaginary beasts —crouching, pouncing, galloping, prancing and kicking—tumble helter-skelter down both arms and cover parts of one leg, chest and back. The designs, preserved by the freezing temperature, were formed by first pricking the skin and then rubbing soot in the perforations. On this double page we show drawings of nine cavorting creatures on the tattooed man and a photo (4) of an enlarged detail from his right arm, depicting a prancing deer with an eagle's beak and long antlers that turn into bird heads. Numbers on drawing 11, a front view of the chieftain, indicate the position of some of the creatures on his body. Running from his left breast to his shoulder is a griffin, its curling tail tipped by the head of a bird or snake (1). A fish (10) and a row of mountain sheep run up one leg. Fantastic procession winding up right arm from hand to shoulder includes a donkey (5), a winged monster with a feline body (6), a carnivore with gaping fanged jaws (9) and a horned mountain ram (7). Notice the extraordinary way in which the ram's hindquarters are twisted right round like those of fantastic beast (3) on back of right arm. Animals were often depicted in this way by Altai artists, usually when being attacked by stronger beasts. Among the motifs on the left arm are an animal with tucked-in forelegs, possibly a mountain ram (2) and a fabulous beast combining features of deer, eagle and feline carnivore (8). What was the purpose of this tattooing? In his book *Frozen Tombs of Siberia,* Sergei I. Rudenko, the Soviet archaeologist who excavated the Pazyryk burial mounds, suggests that it may have "signified noble birth or was a mark of manhood or both", while the whirling monsters "had some magic significance not yet understood". The tattooed chieftain remains an enigmatic figure.

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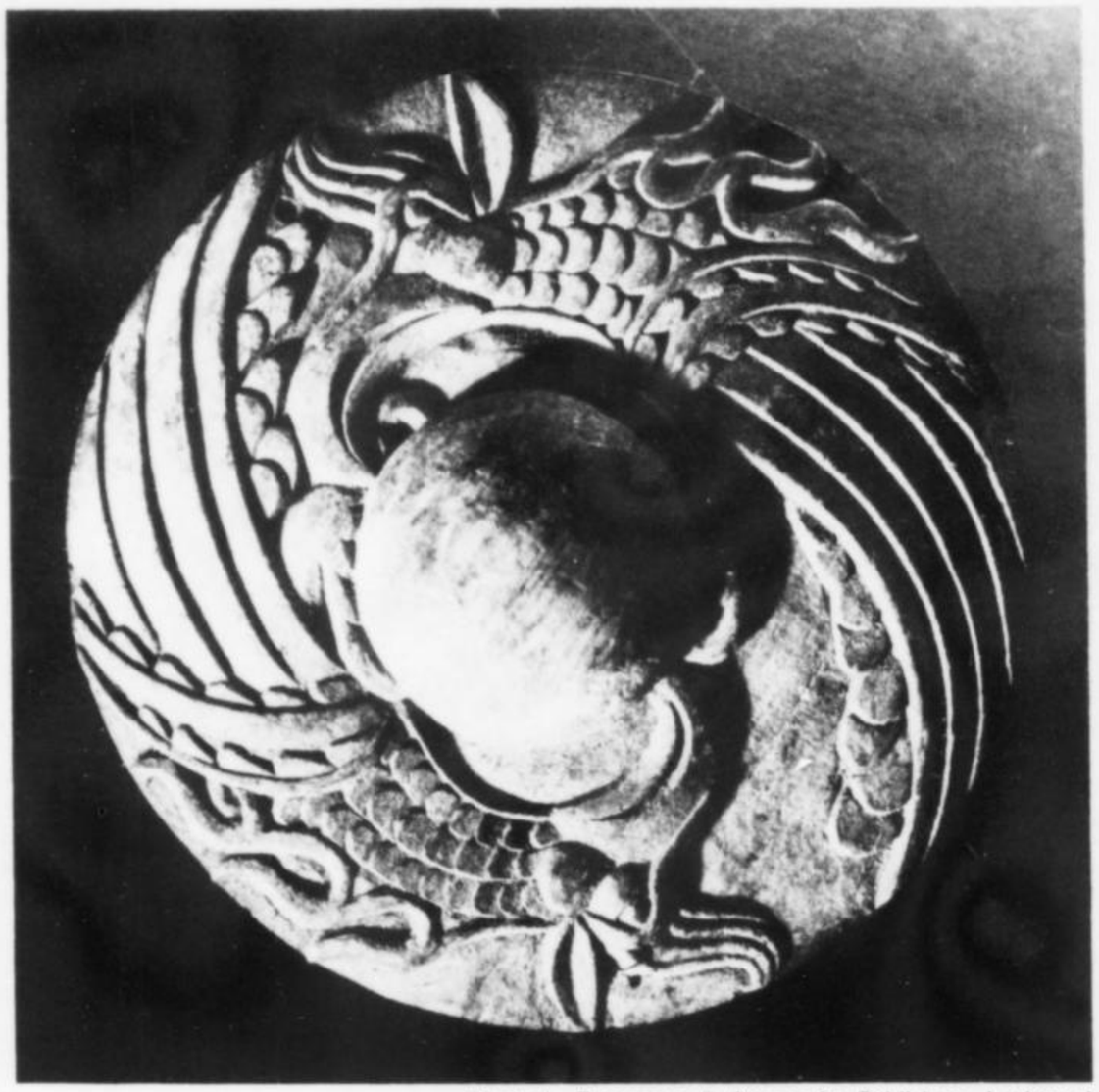

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 32

must have been considered priceless, even in China.

Amid all the treasures unearthed at Pazyryk pride of place must go to a multicoloured pile carpet, woven by a special knotted technique, whose almost square surface (approximately 2 m. by 2 m.) depicts horses and riders, grazing deer, griffins and stylized vegetation. This carpet, the oldest of its kind in the world, is a tribute to the workmanship of its Iranian weavers.

Close contacts with their neighbours led the nomads of the High Altai into mixed marriages, and although the physical features of the men and women buried in the tombs are mainly European, traces of Indo-European and Mongoloid may also be detected. The Altaians, like the Scythians, are presumed to have spoken a number of different dialects of Iranian type.

The art of the ancient tribes of the High Altai is astonishing in its abundance and unique in its variety. It constitutes an excellent corrective to the one-sided notion that Scythian art was a matter merely of artifacts fashioned from metal, bone or clay.

In their choice of images and subjects, the Altaian artists followed the so-called "animal style" of Scythian art. The outstanding quality of the many everyday articles found in their tombs, of their clothes and of the trappings of their horses, indicates that artistic creation mattered to the nomads to an unusual degree, and that they spent their whole lives surrounded by aesthetically pleasing objects.

Art was indeed in the people's blood. And the images of animals and birds, whether wild or domesticated, real or fantastic, which figured in their decorations were more than brightly coloured ornaments. They revealed the spirit of the people, their beliefs, the way they looked at things.

In their travels abroad, the ancient Altaians absorbed what was best in their neighbours' art, and then added their own local colour and interpretations. Thus, they found place in their own creations for griffins and sphinxes borrowed from Western Asia, and for patterns of lotus flowers, ornamental palm-trees and geometrical designs whose origins were in the countries of the near East and in Egypt.

It is possible that the artistic leanings of the people of the High Altai were stimulated by the abundance of materials which lay close at hand. Stock-raising provided them with a source of excellent felt. They fashioned high-quality leathers and furs. Their forests produced the cedar-wood and larch from which the finest carvings could be made, while the plant world placed henna, indigo and madder at their disposal, and the ground under their feet yielded ochre, colcothar and cinnabar as mineral dyes, as well as virtually limitless quantities of gold, silver and other metals, which they used widely for decorative purposes.

As we have seen the riding-horse was the subject of lavish attentions. Indeed, decked out in ceremonial trappings, it must have been a fantastic sight. Its head was enclosed in a decorated leather mask; its bridle had carved wooden cheek-pieces, pasted over with gold leaf. The felt saddle-cushions and the *shabrack* (saddle-cover) were trimmed with multi-coloured appliqué work, while leather covers and sheaths were stitched to the horse's mane and tail.

The clothing and footwear of the Altaians were decorated with patches of coloured felt, fur and leather, and embroidered with patterns in wool or sinew threads bound round with strips of tinfoil. Their felt carpets and wall-hangings, also executed in appliqué work, were colourful masterpieces, decorating the walls and floors of their mobile homes, and even the wooden legs of their low, collapsible tables were carved in the shape of tigers.

Colours also figured in the leather and fur pouches in which they stored cheese and other produce, and in their purses containing hempseeds and imported coriander seeds. Their arrow-shafts and shields were painted, too. One may well ask whether the Altaians had a single object untouched by the hand of an artist.

Among their images, the favourites were beasts of prey (tigers and wolves), and other wild animals (elk, deer and mountain goats and rams), whose lively and realistic portraits reveal the Altaians' great familiarity with their habits and movements. But no less impressive are the imaginary creatures, devised out of

GAGGLE OF GRIFFINS

A griffin slaying a deer is a theme widely used by the nomad artists of the steppes (see back cover). Example from Pazyryk at far left was carved in wood in the 5th century B.C. and is 35 cms high. It shows an abbreviated form of the subject, with the head of each animal symbolizing the entire beast. The comb, ears and wings of the griffin are made from thick leather, as also are the ears and antlers of the deer. Points of antlers consist of cocks' heads on long necks. Left, two griffins coil round a frontal piece from a horse's bridle decoration found in a tomb at Tuekta in the Altai mountains. Right, astonishingly well-preserved leather griffin's head with curving beak and large ears and antlers was unearthed at Pazyryk.

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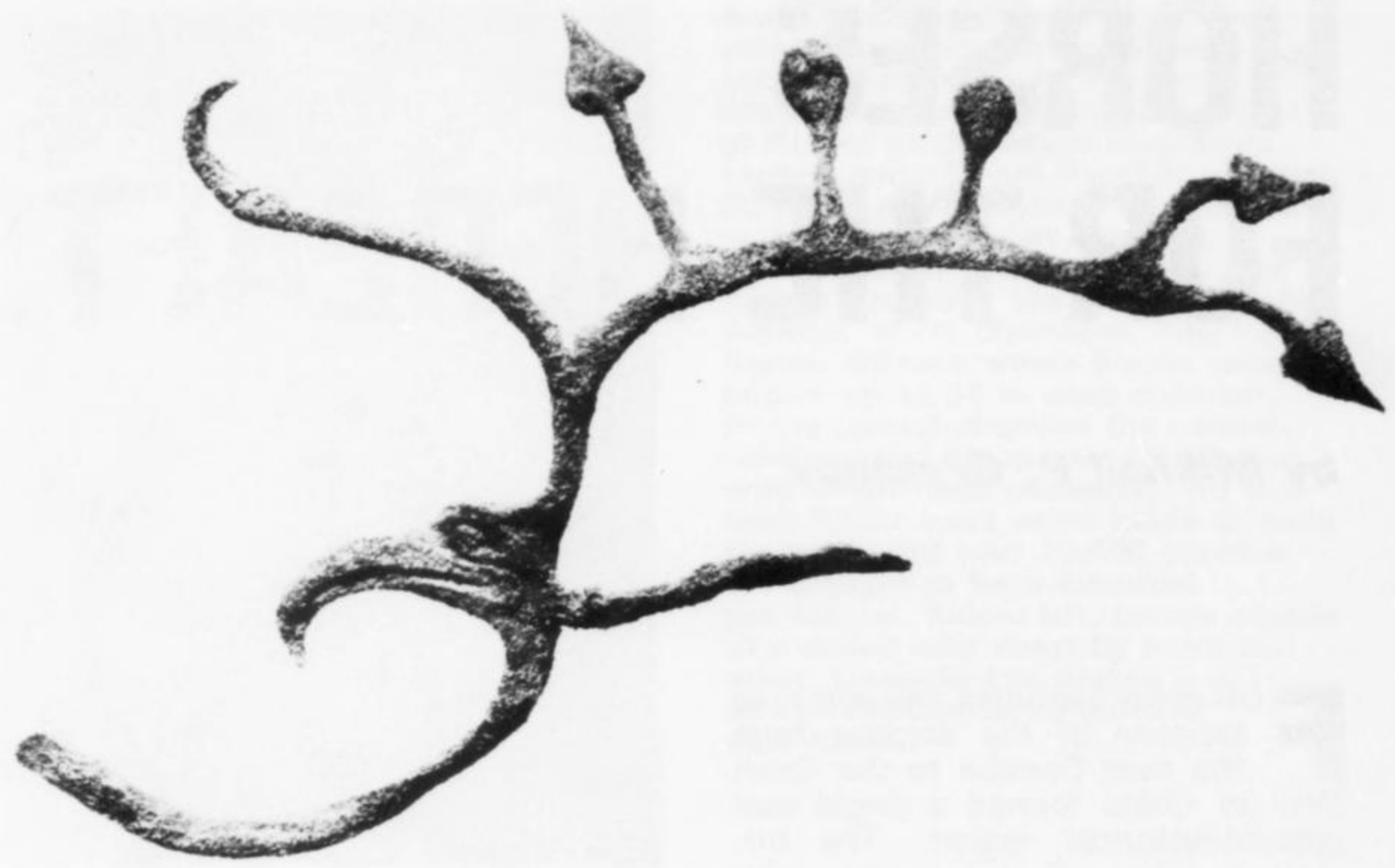


elements of living animals and birds—the griffins and winged tigers, to which the Altaians returned more frequently than the Scythians.

The skills which the Altaian artists applied in so many creative ways have survived until today, transmitted by succeeding generations from the mainspring of an art which was truly popular and never the jealously guarded secret of a few masters.

The Altaian artist always excelled in composition. With admirable ease and virtuosity, the sculptors in wood, bone and horn fitted their subjects into the shape of the object they were decorating, lengthening or shortening the body of the animal, enlarging its head, bending its fore- and hind- quarters into curves. The ancient Altaian sculptors passed unconcernedly from one technique to another, from shallow relief to excised designs, and then to sculpture in the round.

An outstanding feature of Altaian art is the manner in which the execution of a single piece of work involved all these techniques of sculpture, as well as the use of different materials, in which an object could be simultaneously painted in bright colours and pasted over with strips of gold, tinfoil or silver.

This complexity is particularly evident in a carved wooden crest, representing a griffin holding a deer's head in its beak (see back cover) while figures made of soft materials, such as leather and felt, are particularly well represented by the swans, composed of pieces of coloured felt, which may have adorned the canopy of a burial carriage (see page 47).

Altaian art often contains scenes in which beasts of prey and griffins are falling upon deer, elk, and mountain rams and goats. These images possibly reflect a period when the pastoral tribes were at war with each other. This age of men in arms produced its breeds of heroes, in whose honour epic tales and songs must have been composed. It is not surprising, therefore, that the burial chambers also contained musical instruments, in the form of multi-stringed harps and drums.

The excavation of the frozen tombs of the High Altai revealed the ancient, original culture of the Altai nomads, which doubtless had a great influence on Scythian art as a whole. Now, the works of the Altaian masters have found another resting-place, among the collected treasures of world art.

■ **Mariya P. Zavitukhina**

DISANTLED ELK

Wooden elk's heads (each just under 10 cms. long) from Pazyryk were used as bridle ornaments. Their antlers have not survived. The elk figures prominently in the art of the northern nomads.

Photo © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

HORSES FOR THE HEREAFTER

by Mikhail P. Gryaznov

Photos © Aurora Art Publishers, Leningrad

FOR many centuries, the immense expanse of the steppes from the river Danube to the Great Wall of China formed a single vast cultural-historical region. The numerous tribes of this region, who lived in constant contact with each other, differed in their historical past, as well as in their ethnographic heritage, but created for themselves a culture which was uniform in its general outlines.

This broad uniformity resulted from the fact that the culture had taken shape through a series of identical stages of development, which unfolded simultaneously across the whole belt of the steppes. This process began in the Aeneolithic period, the time of transition from the Stone Age to the era of metals. In the steppes of Eurasia this transition coincided with that from the system of acquisitive economy (hunting, fishing and food-gathering) to the productive economy, which in this case centred on cattle-breeding.

The uniformity in the historical development of all the steppe tribes became particularly evident in the time of the Scythians, when the population of the steppes went over to the nomadic way of life, became highly mobile and developed under conditions of extensive inter-tribal cultural exchanges.

In recent years, terms such as "cultures of Scytho-Siberian type" and "the Scytho-Siberian animal style" have begun to be used more and more frequently. However, there has still been very little study of the Asian part of the Scytho-Siberian cultural world. Specialists in Scythian history tend to focus their attention on the monuments of the northern Black Sea area and the problems of the origin of those tribes which may properly be called Scythian. Discussion centres on the question of the origin of the Scythians and the composition of the Scythian animal style.

Until recently, the only undisputed premise in these arguments was that Scythian culture and art came into being in the 7th century B.C. and that the attainments of Scythian culture with its presumed pre-Asiatic sources slowly spread to the East in somewhat modified forms.

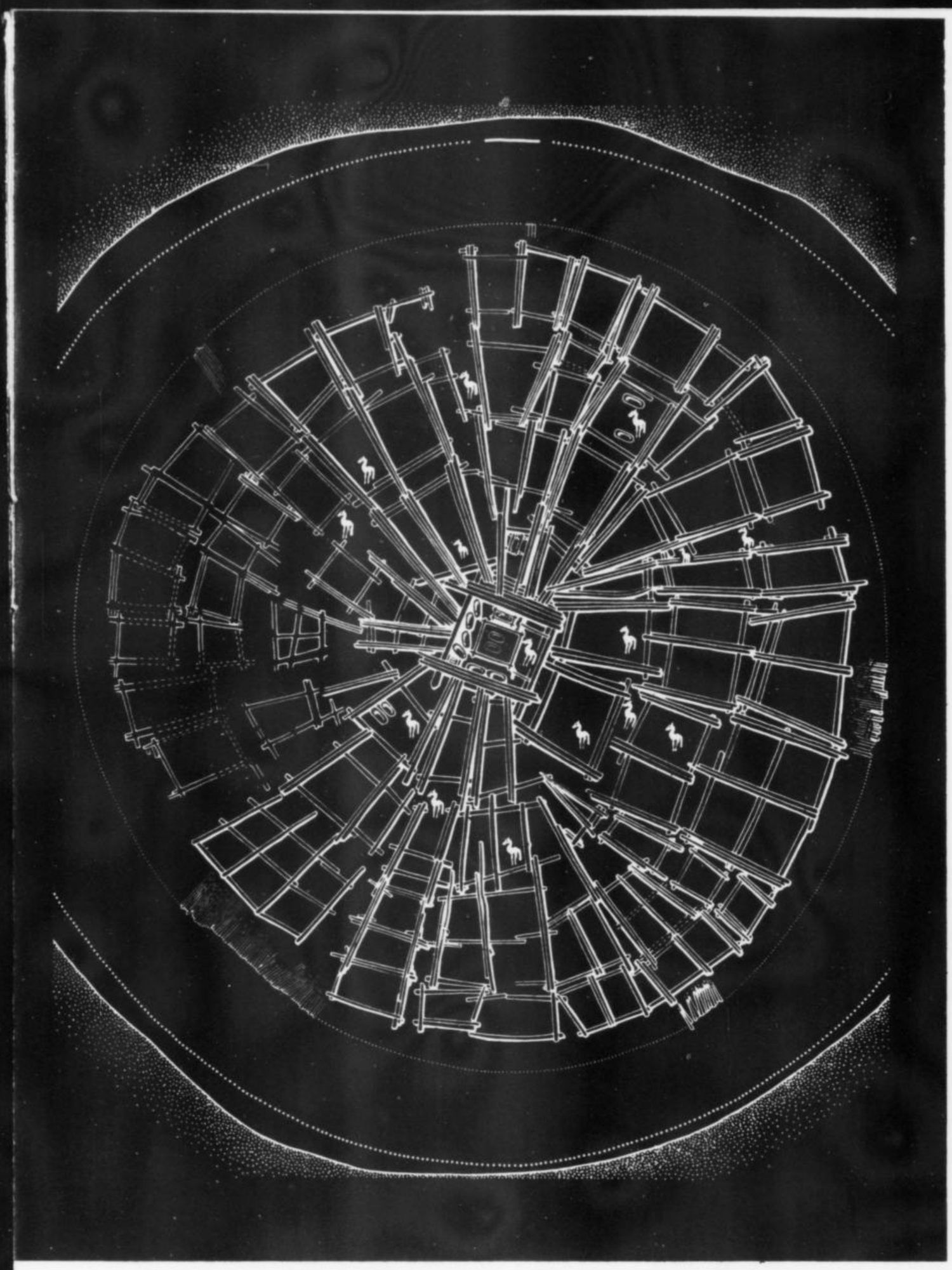
However, it is also true to say that scholars have for long been studying some remarkable monuments of the culture of the early nomads of Siberia, magnificent specimens of their original art. Among these are the amazing gold collection of Peter I, the Pazyryk kurgans (burial mounds) in the Altai (see page 31), and the bronze objects and megalithic enclosures of the kurgans of the Tagar culture on the river Yenisey.

During the last 20 years, monuments of the early Scythian period have been discovered in Central and Southern Kazakhstan, as well as in the western foothills of the Altai and in Tuva. It has become clear that cultures of Scythian type came into being in the East no later than in Scythia itself. They were created and flourished at the same time and parallel with that culture which was properly Scythian.

Many Scythian specialists were surprised by the discovery in 1971, at different points in the Scytho-Siberian lands, of three remarkable monuments—the royal kurgan of Ptichata Mogila in Bulgaria, near the town of Varna, two rich burials in the Vysokaya Mogila on the Dnieper and the royal kurgan of Arzhan in the Tuva Autonomous Soviet Republic. All of these are dated to the 8th-7th centuries B.C., a time which precedes the early Scythian period, and the first two monuments are accepted by the majority of scholars as being pre-Scythian or Cimmerian in culture.

Unlike them, the kurgan of Arzhan belongs to the fully developed culture of Scytho-Siberian type. It too, however, belongs not to its "early Scythian" stage, but to another, even earlier one. In order to understand the exceptional significance of these monuments in explaining the origin and composition of cultures of the Scytho-Siberian type, we need to look at the kurgan of Arzhan in somewhat greater detail.

MIKHAIL PETROVICH GRYAZNOV, *member of the Archaeological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. in Leningrad, has directed excavations of the tomb-complex of Arzhan (Autonomous Soviet Republic of Tuva) and of tombs at Pazyryk in the Altai mountains (Siberia). Professor of Siberian archaeology at the university of Leningrad, he is the author of many published works including a study on the first burial mound excavated at Pazyryk.*



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Nomad chieftains were often buried with their horses—in some cases scores of them, as in the great 8th- 7th-century B.C. tomb-complex at Arzhan in the Sayan mountains (Autonomous Soviet Republic of Tuva). Opposite page: remains of Arzhan's vast circular wooden structure, 120 metres in diameter. Left, plan of Arzhan showing the honeycomb-like network of its chambers. Tiny horse-figures indicate where horses were buried—up to 30 in each chamber. In the central chamber the nomad chieftain and his queen were buried with magnificent ceremony. No less than 6,000 trees were felled to build the tomb and over 10,000 persons are thought to have attended the funeral. Below left, bronze plaque of a coiled wild beast by a nomad artist. Unearthed at Arzhan it is one of the biggest of its kind ever found.

Arzhan is a vast stone tomb, the biggest in the Sayan Mountains—120 metres in diameter. Under its stone mound, a unique wooden structure of enormous dimensions has been splendidly preserved. A large square wooden framework, with an area of more than 65 square metres, is placed directly on the ground. Seventy other such frameworks are arranged around it in radial lines and circles. These together form a round wooden platform, about three metres high, which were covered by a ceiling.

Excavations of the kurgan under my direction went on for four years. Although the monument had been more than once ransacked and plundered even in very ancient times, we discovered a large number of objects and were able to recreate a fairly detailed picture of the magnificent royal funeral.

Thousands of people gathered at the place of burial in the month of September. In seven to eight days they felled more than 6,000 tree-trunks and used them to build the huge multi-chambered platform. The central chamber contained, on a soft litter made of horses' manes and tails, a small framework with double walls and a ceiling, in which the bodies of the king and his queen were placed in separate sarcophagi made of hollowed logs. They were dressed in rich clothing made of multicoloured imported fabrics and costly furs (sable and others).

The tomb was plundered. Virtually nothing of importance has remained, out of what must have been a mass of valuable ornaments: only one small golden plaque and pieces of golden leaves, some turquoise beads and a bead necklace, and 20 small turquoise discs, which were probably the inlay of massive golden plaques depicting animals. These plaques were stolen by the grave-robbers.

On three sides around the royal framework were placed eight hollowed logs in which were buried important personages who accompanied the king. All except one were old or indeed very old, and all were dressed in rich fur or woollen clothes. Only in some of the logs had objects been preserved: these included ornaments of gold and turquoise, bronze arrows, a dagger and some other items. Another five similar personages were buried in neighbouring chambers.

On the fourth side of the royal framework were stacked six saddle horses. Of their rich and magnificent harness there remain a few ornaments from the bridle and saddle straps, some gold and silver, and some made of coloured stone or boar tusks. These horses were obviously the personal property of the king.

One must suppose that numerous representative groups of nomads from all the tribes subject to the king—those who peopled the mountainous steppes of what is now Tuva—gathered for his funeral. They arrived with gifts which befitted the occasion. In seven chambers, positioned to the east of the central one, they buried 138 horses—30 saddle horses in each of three chambers, 15 horses in each of three other chambers and three horses in the last one.

The horses in each chamber all came from the same tribe. All of them were buried with their bridles and saddles. All were old stallions. There are few harness ornaments, but there are wonderful examples of the Scytho-Siberian animal style art—an enormous bronze figure of a beast of prey rolled into the form of a ring, and an ivory head of a bridled horse.

We may also take it that delegations from neighbouring countries took part in the royal funeral. They placed their gifts to the deceased in six chambers, positioned to the north and north-east of the central chamber. In each of these chambers from two to ten horses were buried.

The bridle plates of each group of horses belong to a particular type, and differ from the harness dress of all the other groups; the ornaments of the bridles are also different. There are five remarkable bronze top-pieces (perhaps from battle standards), with monumental figures of mountain rams on them.

In one case, the horses were accompanied by two distinguished elders, buried beside them in hollowed logs. They had come, obviously from some distance, in order to follow the king, who was honoured not only in his own country, but also beyond its borders. The participation of foreign representatives in the funerals of great nomad leaders probably occurred quite frequently in the past.

An ancient Turkic epitaph, for example, informs us that at the funeral of the first Turkic kagan or leader, there gathered "weeping and groaning people" from all the ends of the earth, including some from tribes and peoples not subject to the Turks, i.e. from the coasts of the Pacific, the Siberian taiga and Central Asia. Even "Avars" and "Rum", envoys from the Black Sea steppes and from faraway Byzantium, are said to have been present.

One can judge the numbers of participants in the funeral by the remains of the funeral feast. Around the kurgan of Arzhan the ruins of small round stone enclosures stand in a semi-circle. There are more than 300 of them. In the ruins of each were found the bones of a horse, but only fragments of the skull and bones of the lower part of the legs.

These are evidently remains of the sacrificial horses, placed on the site of the funeral celebrations after the horses' flesh had been eaten and the funeral feast had finished. Such a ritual was widespread among the nomads from the most ancient times onwards. If one horse was eaten on the site of each enclosure, the total number of those present at the funeral feast must have exceeded 10,000.

The tomb of Arzhan is clear evidence that the cultures of the so-called early Scythian period were preceded by cultures of an already fully formed Scytho-Siberian type. Some scholars may hesitate to attribute such monuments in the Black Sea steppes to an early stage of Scythian culture, but there is no doubt about the monuments of the Sayano-Altai region in this regard. Other monuments of this period, of a fully Scytho-Siberian type, are also known in the Sayano-Altai region. Of these, the most interesting by far are the so-called deer stones.

A few deer stones were discovered in the 19th century not far from Arzhan. We also found a fragment of such a stone in the Arzhan tomb on the ceiling of one of its chambers. The deer stones have the appearance of a round or rectangular pillar or a slab-shaped stone, representing a warrior with his weapons in conventionalized form. They range in height from half a metre to three metres.

The lower part of the stone is "belted" with a thong, which has a bow, a dagger, a hatchet and other weapons suspended from it. At the top, where the face of the warrior should be, there are usually three small parallel oblique lines. On the sides are ear-rings and lower down a necklace or pendant. On the smooth surface of the stone the figures of a noble deer and sometimes other animals are often represented. Thus the name of deer stone, although very often there are no representations of deer on the stone.

Drawing shows design on the four sides of a "deer stone" (c. 8th century B.C.) unearthed in the Mongolian steppe. Although named from the figures of deer inscribed on them, such stones are in fact stylized portrayals of nomad warriors. This one wears a neck-ring and ear-rings. Weapons, including a dagger and a hatchet, hang from his belt and deer run slantwise round his body. Many such stones, ranging in height from half a metre to 3 metres, have been found in Mongolia, the Tuva Autonomous Republic of the U.S.S.R. and, in a slightly different form, in the Urals.

Most deer stones have been found in the steppes of Mongolia, and also many in Tuva. They have also been unearthed in the adjoining lands beyond Lake Baikal and in the mountainous Altai. Further west, only isolated examples occur as far as the southern Urals. In the Urals, these stone representations of a warrior are still more conventional—the flat side of the stone bears representations of only a hatchet and a dagger, with sometimes a belt.

It is true that the steles of the Northern Caucasus are very close in type to deer stones, but they represent a somewhat individual variant of conventional warrior representations. Yet another variant of such sculptures existed further to the west. One of these has been found in Romania, and another in Bulgaria in the mound of the Ptichata Mogila kurgan mentioned above.

The monumental sculpture of the Asian and Black Sea steppes, including its conventional image of the warrior, emerged and developed at the very beginning of the formation of the early Scytho-Siberian nomad culture. The consecutive stages in the evolution of this warrior image

Drawing © Aurora Art Publishers, Leningrad

followed similar lines across the wide expanse of the steppes. Similarly, the Scytho-Siberian animal style, despite all its variety, developed uniformly across the vast territory stretching from the Danube to the Great Wall of China.

Monuments known to belong to the initial period of Scythian culture are still very few in number in the steppes both of Asia and the Black Sea area. It is still impossible, on the basis of the finds in the Arzhan tomb and some less significant monuments of the Altai, to give a full picture of the origin and composition of the Scytho-Siberian type cultures, altough some important conclusions can now be drawn.

It can no longer be said that the Scytho-Siberian cultures formed in the 7th century B.C. or later spread from a single centre in different directions, including the East. Secondly, it is clear that the determining factor in the development of the steppe population at that time was the transition to a new economy based on nomadic cattle-breeding. This stimulated the development of new farming methods and cultural forms.

It is difficult to be precise about the movements and practices of particular tribes, but it is clear that from the 8th century B.C. onwards, similar cultures of Scytho-Siberian type emerged and developed simultaneously. Extensive inter-tribal exchanges which occurred both peacefully and by means of wars and plundering raids meant that the cultural acquisitions of one tribe became widely distributed among the other tribes.

The ancient tribes of the Asian steppes were obviously creators and constructors of cultures of Scytho-Siberian type to as great an extent as their contemporaries, the Scythians. It is even possible that the contribution which Asian tribes such as the Altaians and Tuvinians made to the formation of Scytho-Siberian art and culture was sometimes more significant than that made by the Scythians themselves.

Indeed one might well question whether European Scythia was, as many people have hitherto believed, a centre or focus of the Scytho-Siberian territory. After all, it was situated on the far periphery of the Scytho-Siberian territory and its proximity to and close contacts with Mediterranean civilization may to some extent have repressed the creative originality of the Scythians.

■ **Mikhail P. Gryaznov**

SHAMANS AND SHAMANISM

The art of the steppes portrays the griffin in an infinite variety of forms that vividly convey the force and ferocity of this mythical beast. With its powerful eagle's beak and sharp eye, this head of a griffin embellishes the handle of a 5th-century B.C. Scythian sword, unearthed in the Kuban region, to the east of the Black Sea.

Photo © "Miysl" Publishing House, Moscow

epic journeys to a legendary land

by Grigory M. Bongard-Levin and Edvin A. Grantovsky

THE highly original culture of the Scythians was influenced by other peoples and in its turn exerted a considerable influence not only on classical societies and the Ancient East, but, to an even greater extent, on the vast tribal world of Europe and northern Asia.

The Scythians possessed a vast collection of epic tales in which their spiritual culture was reflected. And although the Scythian epic itself has not come down to us, the search for traces of it is quite feasible.

This search is made possible by the ethnic links between the tribes and peoples who lived in the south Russian steppes during the Scythian epoch and by the extensive contact between the Scythians and their neighbours. The latter ranged from the population of the forest zone in the north of Eurasia, whose descendants preserved their old folklore traditions until recent times, to the Hellenes (ancient Greeks) in the south, with their rich ancient literature.

The Scythians also visited Greece. Ancient writers and philosophers often made use of the image of Anacharsis, a Scythian whom the Greeks included among the Seven Wise Men of Antiquity.

The varied accounts of the Scythians found in ancient literature make particular mention of epic kings, heroes of Scythian legends, the gods of the Scythian pantheon and fantastical beings, such as the one-eyed Arimaspean warriors and the griffins which guarded a hoard of gold. These accounts attested the existence among the Scythians of complex mythological and religious conceptions and of a richly developed epic.

Certain Scythian images worked their way into the subjects of Hellenic mythology, while some characters of Greek myth share the attributes of similar figures in Scythian mythology and have "moved" from the places they inhabited in more ancient Greek tradition to the Scythian North.

It is fortunately possible to find confirmation of the Scythian origin of the motifs mentioned above among the peoples of north-eastern Europe and Siberia, far from the regions of Scytho-Hellenic contact.

The folklore of these peoples features conceptions of one-eyed people similar to the Arimaspeans, and of winged monsters like the gold-guarding griffins. These images included some which are close to the Greek and are endowed with similar traits, such as the death-bearing flying maidens, similar to the gorgons, the winged daughters of a Titan and also the cold wind whose abode, like that of Boreas, god of the north wind in later Greek tradition, is a cave.

Can such coincidences be accidental when they occur in the legends of countries as remote from each other as Hellas and the forest regions in the north of Eurasia, in legends rooted in ancient literary traditions as well as in those which have only been recorded by modern folklorists and anthropologists?

The Volga-Ural steppes, as far as the Ural mountains, and the land beyond the Urals were inhabited by the Issedones and were known to the Hellenes through the stories of the Scythians and the Greek Aristeas, who had been in Scythia in the 7th century and had obviously reached the Issedones.

The forests near the Ural mountains, evidently those along the Kama and Volga rivers, were inhabited by the Argippeans. Herodotus recounts in this connexion that "those of the Scythians who go to them (the Argippeans) have to employ seven translators and seven languages". The existence in the Scythian epoch of a trade route as far as the south Ural region and the Volga-Kama forests is confirmed by archaeological finds in these regions of "imported" objects from the northern Black Sea area.

The contacts between the Scythians and the forested Volga-Ural regions from which the Finno-Ugric languages spread explain the many word borrowings from the steppe peoples which have been found in the Finno-Ugric languages, borrowings connected with both the material and spiritual culture and religious and mythological conceptions.

These borrowings include the passage of the name of the Wind God ("Vata") among the Eastern Indo-Europeans and Scythians into the name of the North Wind ("Vat") used by the Ugrians beyond the Urals. In addition, stories about "old man North Wind" are very close to what ancient literature tells us about the "Boreas" who brought icy cold into Scythia. Both of them find a traveller, envelop him in their furious breath and are capable of sweeping him off his feet, carrying him away or destroying him.

There can be no doubt that this "Boreas", a character of purely Scythian mythology, was identified by the Greeks with their North Wind, the Boreas.

What do we learn from archaeological evidence? In the area round the Kama River, for example, archaeologists have found cult figures of creatures which are half-bird, half-beast, with the head of a wolf or a dog. Winged beasts or "griffins" are also a frequent subject of Scythian art, in which they usually combine the features of an eagle and a lion (or some other "feline" beast of prey).

However, several early Scythian artifacts from the Black Sea area (of the 6th-5th centuries B.C.) combine the image of a bird-beast with the features of a dog. And it is no accident that Aeschylus (6th-5th centuries B.C.) in his *Prometheus Bound* calls the bird-like griffins "silent" or "unbarking" dogs (unlike the traditional ancient description of griffins as being like lions).

Ancient literature offers us significant information regarding the "geographical" description of Scythia and the lands beyond it if we base ourselves on the work of various authors of Antiquity.

GRIGORY MAXIMOVICH BONGARD-LEVIN, *Vice-President of the International Association for Sanskrit studies, is engaged on research at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the U. S. S. R. A Unesco consultant and a winner of the Jawaharlal Nehru prize, for the promotion of international understanding he is an authority on the cultural problems and history of Central Asia and India. A book he has written jointly with Edvin A. Grantovsky,* From Scythia to India *(Moscow, 1974) gives a fuller treatment of the subject of this article.*

EDVIN ARVIDOVICH GRANTOVSKY, *a specialist in the ancient history of Iran, Central Asia and the Scythians, is engaged in research at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the U. S. S. R. Among his many published works is his study,* The Early History of the Iranian Tribes of Near Asia *(Moscow, 1970).*

From south to north lay regions inhabited by peoples who really existed, such as the Argippeans and the Issedones. Beyond them, however, and as far as the great northern mountains, usually called the Ripas, there lived fabulous tribes and fantastical creatures, including the now familiar Arimaspeans, griffins and others. Here also lay the abode of "Boreas". These regions had been abandoned by nature, were swathed in darkness and covered in snow; this was the kingdom of deepest winter.

But even further north, in the direction of the Ripas, the golden peaks of which reached the sky, and around which turned the sun and the stars, on the mountainous heights and the shore of the Northern Sea beyond them lay a country with a warm climate, free from the cold winds and infinitely fertile.

In its woods and forests lived a blessed and holy people, the "Hyperboreans" of ancient tradition. The sun here rose and set only once a year: the day lasted six months, and the night the six remaining months. During the day the inhabitants sowed crops in the morning, cut them in the afternoon and in the evening gathered fruit from the trees.

Whose creation is this "geographical" picture? That of the Greeks or the Scythians? Or, to put it another way, which elements of it belong to which people?

The Ripa mountains might correspond to the Urals, while the legends about their gold and the griffins who guard it certainly reflect notions about the mining of gold in regions round the Urals, a notion which is borne out by ancient workings in these regions. But the Urals range runs from south to north, whereas the Ripa mountains extend in latitude right across the land to the north of the Scythian world.

The Northern Sea which stretched beyond them may be an echo of what the Scythians knew about the Arctic Ocean, although the existence there of a bountiful country with a warm climate is a piece of fantasy. Yet day and night last a half-year each in this country, and it is difficult or indeed impossible to treat this as anything but the reflection of a real fact, namely the rotation of the Polar day and night (although, of course, they do not last "uninterruptedly" for half a year each).

The ancestors of the ancient Iranian and Indian tribes who lived beside the ancestors of the Scythians had much in common with them in terms of economy, social structure, culture and religion.

On the basis of the remaining fragmentary evidence about the Scythians and their language, as well as the parallels within the Indo-Iranian language system, scholars have established the basic features of the Scythian language and its dialects, and the nature of the Gods in the Scythian pantheon.

The details of some Indian and Iranian epics and traditions also correspond precisely to Scythian conceptions about the North. In the two great epics of India, the *Mahabharata* and the *Rāmāyana,* for example, we find a geographical foundation in the form of a "northern panorama".

They relate how far away to the north of India, beyond the real mountains and deserts, countries and peoples, and beyond fabulous kingdoms and tribes, stand the sacred mountains of Meru. Their golden peaks thrust into the sky and around them revolve the heavenly bodies.

Beyond the mountains of Meru lies the Northern Sea, identified with the White, or Milky Sea. On its shores and on the northern slopes of the Meru live a fabulous, blessed people, "divorced from all evil, indifferent to all concepts of honour and dishonour, wonderful in appearance and abounding in vitality."

There, beyond the mountains of Meru, over whose summits "the golden haired sun rises for half a year"... "the day lasts half a year and the night as long", and "one night and one day together equal a year". The stationary polar star is mentioned as also are the position of constellations which can only be observed in the Far North, above the latitude of 55 North. These descriptions of the same inaccessible northern country are "communicated" by the sacred bird Garuda to the hermit Galava before carrying him off to this far-away "land of blessedness".

It is important to note that the information about "polar phenomena" in Indian epic tales goes back to a time when it could not have been influenced by Indian astronomy. Therefore, the "polar" motifs in the tales of India must be seen as "information" gained from the north.

The whole epic and mythological setting in which these polar allusions appear in early Indian tradition indicates that they belong to the legends which the ancestors of Indian tribes had preserved since the time when they were neighbours of related tribes living to the north.

In the ancient Iranian *Avesta* (or *Zend Avesta*) together with its affiliated works of Zoroastrian literature, similar mythological motifs have also been preserved. These include mention of the blessed abode of a fabulous people who see the sun rise and set only once a year and for whom a day and a night last a year. Their benevolent land is situated near cold countries, where the winter lasts for 10 months and there are two months of cold summer, beside great northern mountains. These mountains, which reach the heavens, play the same "astronomical" role as in Indian and Scythian tradition.

All this leads to the conclusion that there is a common origin to the Indo-Iranian legends about countries in the Far North and the tradition about remote regions lying beyond the Scythians. This whole cycle of interrelated concepts has a single archaic religious basis.

In each of the three traditions, Indian, Iranian and Scythian, the whole panorama is arranged in the same order, proceeding from real geographical areas in the south to the legendary lands by the Northern Ocean. In each tradition, this ocean is inaccessible to mortals and their attempts to make their way there end either in failure or in the death of a bold hero, whose route takes him through the territory of fabulous tribes and supernatural creatures.

At this point we have a clearer idea of the "geographical" distribution of those characters whom the Scythians, and after them the Greeks, located between Scythia and the northern mountains—the death-bearing maidens who lived in darkness, the Arimaspeans, the griffins and others.

The Indian story-tellers, for example, warned that in the foothills of the Meru there lay a deserted region of gloom, which filled mortals with fear of the dark. Monsters, vampires, female cannibals and evil giants inhabited this dreadful place.

But the image of the "winter" barrier has practically disappeared from the stories of torrid India. The legends of the Iranians, however, a people geographically and ethnically closer to the Scythians, mention the fatal hard frost of winter, which comes from the great northern mountains. They also refer to the death in the foothills of heroes who freeze in the snow carried by the hostile wind. This role is obviously played in Scythian legends by the North Wind, which blows from the slopes of the Ripas and destroys the traveller.

It is notable that Herodotus also mentions several times that it is impossible to penetrate the northern regions beyond Scythia because of the excessive snows and the cold. He also held the view that in general people did not live there. But the north of Europe, as far as the Arctic Ocean, was inhabited long before the pre-Scythian and the Scythian epochs. Even the Scythians referred to several "peoples" as living there, although they endowed them with unusual features.

We find in the Indian and Iranian stories that there is a direct link between this theme and one of the epic cycles, which concludes with the victorious king (Yudhisthira in the *Mahābhārata,* and Khosrow in Iranian epic) leaving his kingdom and arriving alive in the blessed land of the northern mountains. At the same time, the heroes who accompany him perish in the snow, which according to Iranian legend, and

CYCLOPS Vs. WINGED SENTINELS

Far beyond Scythia, according to legend, lived fabulous creatures such as the Arimaspeans and the griffins. The winged griffins guarded a store of gold from the giant one-eyed Arimaspeans who were always trying to steal it. Legends of their struggles entered the mythology of many peoples, as is shown by these strikingly similar scenes of combats between the giant Cyclops and the griffins, found in two distant places. The one above adorns a gold ritual headdress from a burial mound at Great Blisnitza, in the region east of the Black Sea; the other comes from a relief on a tomb in southern Italy. Both works date from the 4th century B.C.

Photos © "Miysl" Publishers, Moscow

also to Herodotus, makes the route to the north from the Scythian kingdom impassable.

Other chosen heroes and righteous men could only reach this land on their death. However, there existed another "means" of getting there, for a limited time, and this means was available only to certain renowned sages, priests and hermits. These miraculous "journeys" also formed the subjects of Indian, Iranian and Scythian legends. Such, for example, were the exploits of Galava, Narada and Shuka in the *Mahābhārata* and of Arda-Viraz in Zoroastrian tradition.

In the ancient world there was a story about the Scythian, Abaris, who "arrived" from the land of the Hyperboreans. He had "made his way across rivers, seas and impassable places, as if he were travelling through air" and during this time had performed purifications, had driven out pestilent diseases, predicted earthquakes, calmed the winds and soothed the waves of the sea.

The "information" about Abaris was basically preserved by the Pythagorean brotherhood, who included it among their conceptions about the migration of the soul. But the legends about him obviously emerged independently. Herodotus also knew about the "journeys" of Abaris and related that "he did not take anything for food". But Herodotus preferred to give a more detailed account of that other legendary figure, Aristeas, relating how, while the body of Aristeas lay in one place, he himself appeared in another, or how, while following Apollo, Aristeas took on the form of a raven.

The basis of the legends about Aristeas were traditions formed in the time of the earliest contact between Greeks and Scythians. There was a definite similarity between several aspects of Scythian religious beliefs and practice and the Greek cult of Apollo, of which Aristeas was an initiate. And it was this similarity that led to the widespread dissemination of the legends about Aristeas.

The poem *Arimaspea,* reputed to have been written by Aristeas, also mentioned the journey to the land of "the blessed people" lying beyond Scythia and the great mountains on the shore of the Northern Ocean. The poem is in fact concerned with a real journey through Scythia and talks about the tribes which inhabit it, their life and their customs.

The author of the poem was also familiar with the subjects of the myths and the epic which were current among the Scythians and their neighbours. The "flight" of Aristeas to the land of the blessed Northern people is considered by several scholars to reflect conceptions about the "journeys" of the soul. These conceptions had undoubtedly been borrowed from cults of a shamanic type.

"During ceremonies", writes the eminent Soviet anthropologist Sergei Tokarev, "the shaman frequently falls unconscious; this is bound to make the spectators think of the flight of his 'soul'; the delirium and the hallucinations of the shaman often consist in his seeing far-away countries and talking loudly about his journeyings." A particular role was played by the cult of birds: the shaman or his soul "set off" on their distant travels in the form of a bird (most often, a raven), "flying over" familiar or mythical countries.

Shamanism was widespread in Antiquity among the peoples of the north, in Asia and in Europe. But the religions of the ancient Indians,

Iranians and Scythians belong as a whole to another type despite some similarities in their epic and myth to the images of "northern mythology". However, a good many Iranian and Indian specialists consider that the religious practice of the Indians, Iranians and Scythians had features that were similar to northern shamanism, especially that of the Finno-Ugrians.

Historians know something about the earliest connexions between the ancestors of the ancient Indians, Iranians and Scythian tribes and the ancestors of the Finno-Ugrians. They know, for instance, of many similarities between the languages of these peoples. Among these is the name of the ecstatic medium with the aid of which the shamans and priests put themselves into a state of ritual possession.

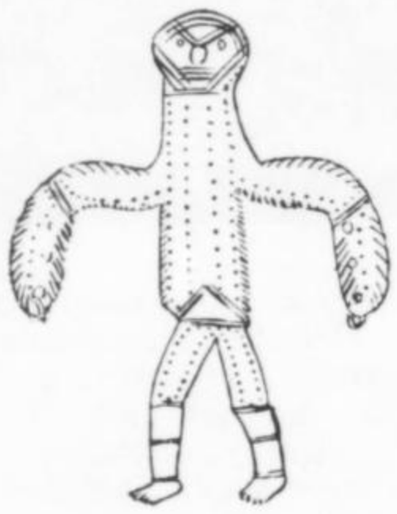
Various plants were used for this purpose, including hemp. The Scythians also were aware of these properties of hemp and used it in cult ceremonies. The Greek lexicographer Hesychius informs us that hemp is "the Scythian smoking plant" and is so powerful that it makes all participants in this ritual sweat. The Western neighbours of the Scythians, the inhabitants of Thracia, used hemp in preparing a sacred libation.

This is what Herodotus has to tell us about the practice: the Scythians "place three poles leaning towards each other, and pull onto them strips of woollen felt, stretching these to fit as tightly as possible. They then throw red-hot stones into a vessel standing between these poles and the woollen strips.

"In their land grows hemp—a plant very like flax, but much coarser and taller; it grows wild there and is also sown by the people... The Scythians take the seeds of the hemp, crawl under the felt strips and there throw the seeds onto the heated stones; these seeds give out such a vapour as no Grecian steam-bath can exceed. The Scythians enjoy this and howl loudly..."

This probably reflects a ritual ceremony which is reminiscent of shamanic practices. If this is the case, then the "howl" represents the song of the servant of the cult, in a state of ecstasy which is attained by the stupefying effect of the smoke from roasting hemp seeds. Herodotus' account and the ritual nature of the custom he describes are confirmed by the excavations of the famous Soviet archaeologist Sergei Rudenko, in the Altai mountains of Siberia (see p. 34).

In the burial mounds of the Altai (5th-4th centuries B.C.) the permafrost layer has preserved some small huts made of poles lashed together at the top (two of the huts had covers on them, one of woollen felt and the other of hide). In one of these graves copper vessels were



On wings of ecstasy

According to Scythian mythology a fabulous land where day and night each lasted half a year lay far to the north in the polar regions. It was a bountiful country that could be reached only by heroes and sages. This belief, recorded by many Greek and Roman authors of antiquity, closely resembles those found in ancient Indian and Persian mythologies and epics, which describe an earthly paradise lying beyond towering mountains towards the north. How were the priests, sages and heroes to reach this reputedly inaccessible land? According to the Shamanic traditions of the Asian steppes the journey could be accomplished by entering into an ecstatic state, the secret of which was known to the shaman. Soothsayer and healer, the shaman could transform himself into a bird (Siberian shaman in drawing at left wears costume with sleeves representing wings).

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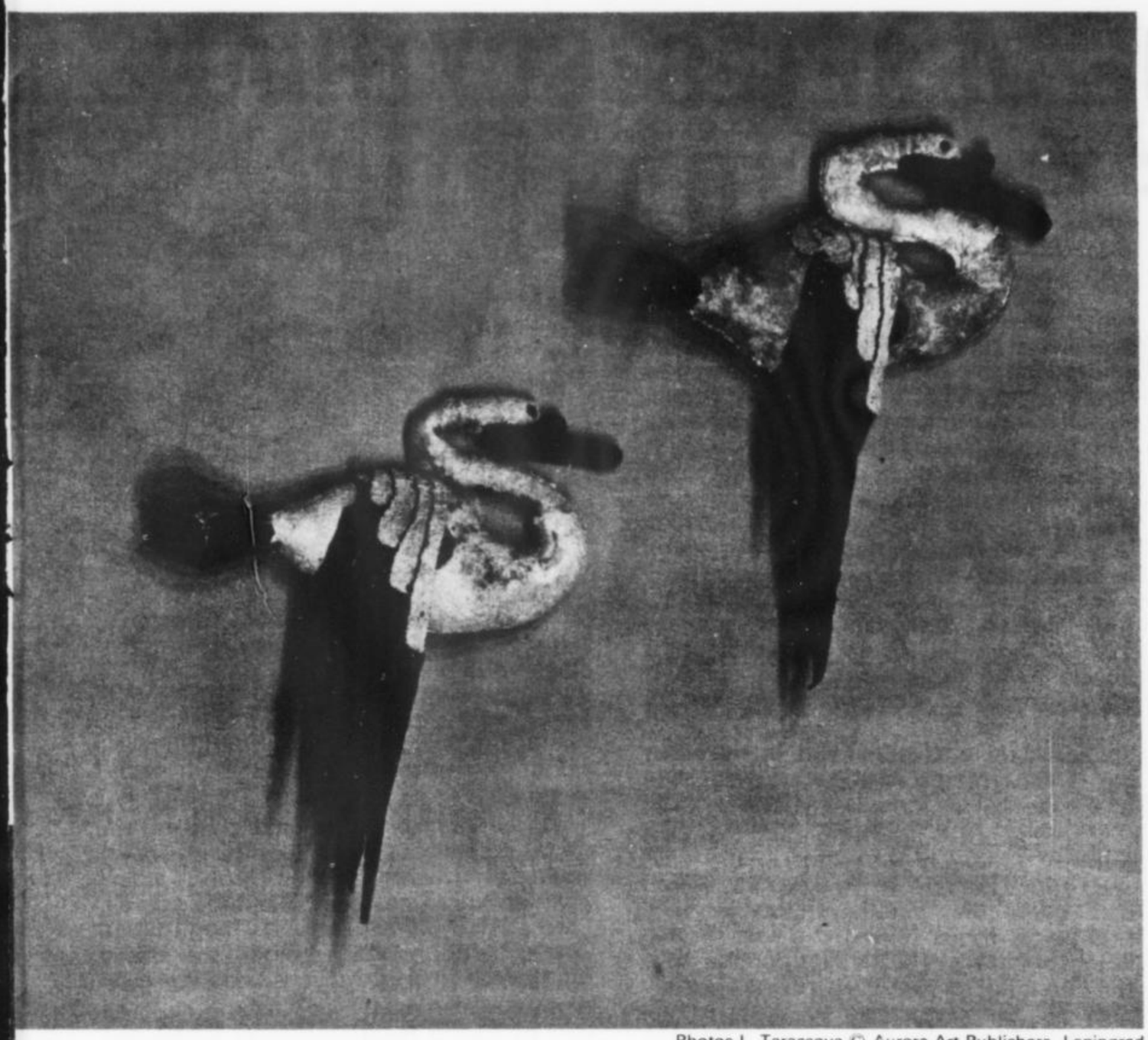

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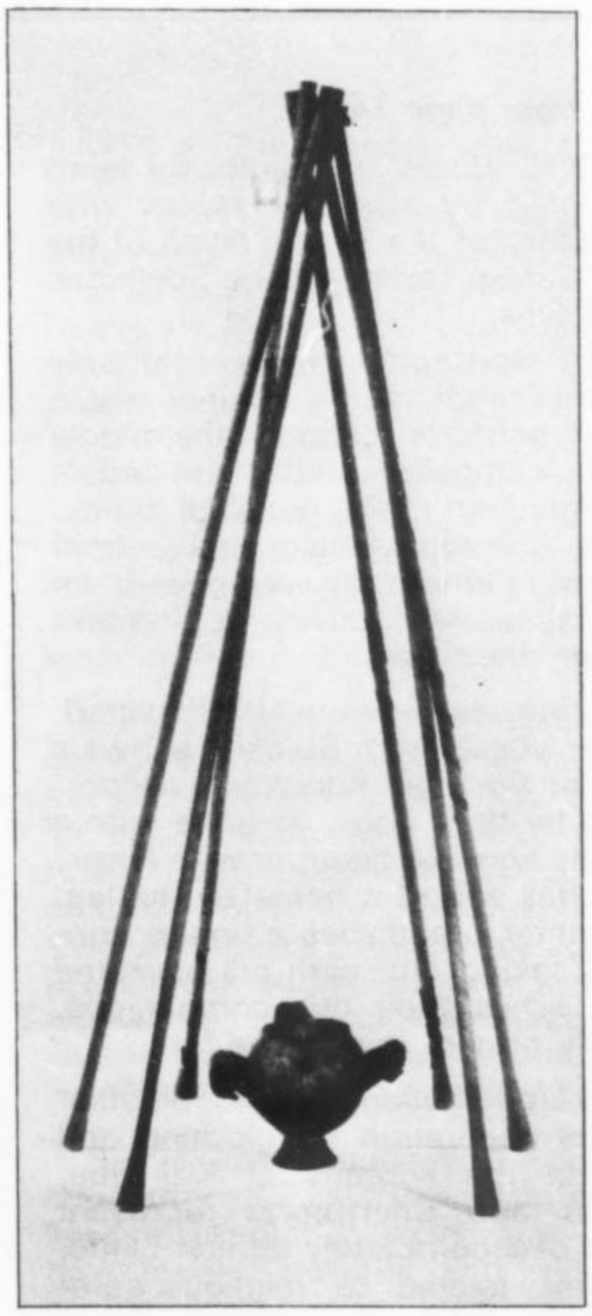

And his soul, leaving his body, took flight. One way in which the shaman attained a state of ecstasy was by inhaling the fumes of hemp. The remains of a "hemp" tent (seen at left) were found in a tomb at Pazyryk. They consist of the tent poles and a receptacle for burning hemp seeds. In Indian legends the journey to the mythical country was accomplished on the back of sacred birds such as Garuda (above left in a 19th-century Indian miniature). In northern Europe and the Urals, the legendary bird was depicted on metal plaques (drawings opposite page). These plaques shaped as bird-like creatures often bore representations of the face or standing figure of a man. Above, felt swans from a tomb at Pazyryk. They were used as carriage decorations 2,400 years ago.

found under such a structure: they contained stones which had been in a fire and partially charred hemp seeds; in addition, a leather bag, containing hemp seeds, was tied to one of the hut poles. Similar shamanic ceremonies, performed in yurts or chums (conical pole-huts used by the Asian nomads) have been described by anthropologists.

Facts are also known about the use of other plants as a means of achieving ecstasy during cult ceremonies and Indian and Iranian religious texts record a legend derived from a common source about the theft of a cult plant, the soma-plant, from the great mountains by the sacred bird Garuda, also called Sh'ena in the *Rgveda,* a collection of Vedic hymns to the deities. Iranian tradition calls the same creature Saena, and later Simurg.

Legends similar to those which were told about Garuda in ancient India and Simurg in Iran were current among the Scythians. This huge "wonder-bird" was also one of the mythological images used by the forest tribes of north-eastern Europe, the Urals and the land beyond the Urals.

The same creature is also depicted on the large number of metal plaques portraying birds and bird-like creatures, on the bodies of which the face or the standing figure of a man is often represented. Excavations have shown that such subjects were quite common even in the Scythian epoch.

This mythology and epic reflects not just legendary conceptions and the products of fantasy but also real facts about the surrounding world. The mythology of the Scythians, as much as that of other peoples, was a characteristic combination of fantasy and the rudiments of scientific thought.

Not only did the Greeks expand their geographical horizon through their contacts with the Scythians but, as a result of their familiarity with Scythian epic, myth and cosmology, even in semi-legendary form, they acquired new information about the geography of the remote forest zone, the northern Arctic Ocean, and the "polar phenomena".

The "Scythian source" may be viewed as the first stage in the history of European science's knowledge of the Far North. And although new information was added to this store later in Antiquity, Greek and Latin authors, in describing the northern countries, continued for many centuries to refer to the tradition which went back to the 7th-6th centuries B.C. and was based on information acquired from the Scythian world of the time.

■ **G.M. Bongard-Levin and E.A. Grantovsky**

THE OSSETES: SCYTHIANS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

by Vasily Ivanovich Abaev

THE Scythian people did not disappear from the face of the earth without leaving a trace. If we look at an ethnographic map of the Caucasus, which is a patchwork of more than forty different nationalities, we find in the central part a small group of people, known as the Ossetes, whose population numbers 400,000.

It was established long ago that the Ossetes are in no way related to their Caucasian neighbours. Immigrants from the steppes of south Russia, they are descendants of the Alani who, according to Josephus—a Jewish scholar and historian of the first century A.D.—were a Scythian tribe living in the vicinity of the Don and the Sea of Azov.

During the great migrations of the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., some of the Alani moved across Europe as far as France and Spain. The French name *Alain* and the English *Alan* date from that period.

The remaining Alani made their way from Eastern Europe to the foothills of the Caucasus, where they established what was for the times a powerful feudal state. They were converted to Christianity in the tenth century, and during the Middle Ages they maintained active relations with Byzantium, Georgia and Russia.

The Mongol invasion and the campaigns of Tamerlane were a disaster for the Alani: one part of the population was annihilated in the incessant wars; another fled to Hungary, where they were known as the "As" and retained their ethnic individuality for another several hundred years. A third part joined in the expeditions of the marauding Mongolians and was dispersed in foreign lands.

The Alani who remained in the Caucasus took refuge in the narrow passes of the central regions.

One cannot help comparing the vast territory between the Altai in the east and the Danube in the west, which had been the home of the Scytho-Sarmatian tribes during the last millennium of the pre-Christian period, with the handful of narrow ravines which was all that was left to the Ossetes in the 18th century A.D.

Here, indeed is food for thought about the reverses of fortune! At Pitsunda, on the Black Sea coast, a little grove of pine trees is all that remains of a once-enormous forest. Fate dealt similarly with the ancient Scythian world, which is now reduced to a tiny group of Ossetes, lost in the Caucasian mountains.

Two priceless treasures of their remote past have, nevertheless, survived—their language and their folklore.

The Scythians themselves left no written texts. But Greek epigraphic inscriptions dating from the period when the Scythians occupied the lands north of the Black Sea contain hundreds of Scythian and Sarmatian common nouns.

As eminent an authority as the Russian philologist Vsevolod Miller and also specialists from other countries have convincingly demonstrated that knowledge of the Ossetic tongue makes interpretation of these inscriptions easier and that they can in fact be considered as examples of the language of the ancient Ossetes.

A number of words still used by the Ossetes, such as "farn" (paradise), "hsar" (military prowess), "andon" (iron), "aldar" or "ardar" (master), "liman" (friend), "furt" (son), "fida" (father), "sag" (stag) "sar" (head), "stur" (big), are easily recognized in these inscriptions.

Modern Ossetic also provides the key to the meaning of many names on the map of the region between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. The names of the Don, the Dnieper and the Dniester are easier to understand, for example, when we know that in Ossetic—and in this language alone—the word for "river" is "don".

Traces of the Scythian world as evident

VASILY IVANOVICH ABAEV, *a well-known Soviet scholar and orientalist, is a specialist in Iranian civilization and in the language and folklore of the Ossetes. He is scientific adviser to the Institute of Linguistic Studies of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences and is the author of 250 studies including a monograph on Scytho-European linguistic geography.*

HERODOTUS AMONG THE SCYTHIANS *(Continued from page 14)*

detailed elements cast separately, soldered together in a composite article, and then carefully polished.

The battle scene, which is depicted in relief, is treated with meticulous attention to detail: the decorations on the weapons and clothing of the warriors, and even the curls of their hair and beards, are engraved with extreme accuracy.

Similar virtuosity is to be found in the execution of the Chertomlyk vase, the frieze in particular. All the figurines of men and horses were moulded separately and only arranged in a composition when they were soldered to the vessel.

The chief interest of the objects produced by the jewellers of the northern Black Sea coast lies in the themes which they represent, and in the light which they throw on this or that aspect of Scythian life.

Finds from the burial mounds teach us much about Scythian weapons, clothes and ornaments, but the picture is—so to speak—unfinished and lacking in depth. On the other hand, the scenes in relief portrayed by the metal-workers show the objects found by archaeologists actually being used, and thus provide a fascinating glimpse of the Scythians as they really were, at different moments of their existence.

There can be no doubt that all these objects had their origins in an ancient culture and, more specifically, in Greek craftsmanship. In style and tradition, they were classically Greek, and they could only have been produced in a context of Hellenic notions and capacities, which conditioned all stages of their production. Even their secondary details, such as the ornamental motifs of palms, acanthus-plants and wattled designs, were essentially Greek.

Many of the objects in metalware were, however, Greek neither in form nor in function. The spherical vessels found at Kul Oba closely resemble the earthenware vessels of the earliest Scythian culture, and were doubtless used in religious ceremonies, while the torques and the plaques used as ornaments on clothing had Scythian, and not Greek significance.

Thus, the majority of these articles were Greek in execution, but Scythian in form, while the images with which they were decorated have for a long time and almost unanimously been considered by scholars familiar with the history of the region north of the Black Sea to represent the Scythians themselves.

The Scythians were certainly warriors, and many images show them in battle or resting in the middle of their campaigns. But the artists also depicted more peaceful times, and the Chertomlyk vase shows them engaged in what may well have been a typical nomad activity, roping and hobbling their horses.

Hunting scenes were also depicted. A silver vessel from Solokha shows a group of Scythian horsemen, accompanied by their dogs, at grips with a fantastic lion-like creature with horns, which has seized a horse by the leg. One hunter brandishes a spear, another is taking aim with his bow and arrow, while their two companions, similarly armed, join in the fray.

Some of the small gold plaques used as decoration for clothing and found in the kurgans of Kul Oba, Solokha and Chertomlyk represent scenes of a completely different kind, doubtless related to religious ceremonies.

Photo © APN, Moscow

THE MOUNTAIN REMEMBERS THE STEPPE

Much of the folklore and tales of the Ossetes, a small group of mountain people in the Caucasus, originates in the epics of the ancient Scythians of the steppes. Here, Dris Tautiev, an honoured bard of the Northern Ossetian Republic (U.S.S.R.) and one of the 400,000 descendants of the Scythians, sings to the strains of the "kiatmancha".

as those found in the language of the Ossetes are also to be found in their folklore, and more particularly in the heroic epics which, like other peoples of the Caucasus, they still relate. The heroes of these epics are a race of warriors known as the Narts.

Vsevolod Miller and the French scholar Georges Dumézil have concluded after careful comparative analysis that much of what happens in the tales of their adventures corresponds very closely to the Scythian customs and way of life described by Herodotus and other ancient authors. All these sources mention, for example, an enchanted cup from which only the most valiant warriors may drink, sword-worship, and very similar burial ceremonies.

Comparison of the Epic of the Narts with similar narratives from other cultures immediately reveals one salient feature—the central character is a woman. It would be difficult to find in other epic poems of the world a female personality of such stature and strength.

Satána, as she is called, is the essence, the centre through whom all things flow. She is the mother of the people, the provider and mentor of the principal heroes, Soslan and Batradz. She is the wise counsellor, the omnipotent sorceress and the guiding force without whose intervention nothing worthy of mention can be accomplished. None of the heroes is indispensable to the Epic of the Narts. Without Satána, there is no Epic.

Obviously so imposing a figure could only emerge from a society where women occupied a dominant position. And such, according to the unanimous testimony of ancient authors, was the society of the Sarmatians and the Massagetes. "The Sarmatians are governed by their women", one of these authors tells us. Satána thus joins the ranks of the Scythian, Saka and Massagete queens and warrior-maidens, to stand beside Zarina, Amaga and Tomiris, whose names have also been handed down by tradition. She is a product of the steppe and not of the Caucasus.

Nor do the natural surroundings in which the Epic of the Narts unfolds bear any resemblance to the mountain fastness of present-day Ossetia. Broad expanses of sea and steppe are the usual setting for the adventures of the Narts. The wind of the steppes lashes through the narrative. We feel the endlessness of the Scythian plains and hear the stampeding of horses, as a herd of stags appears, pursued by tireless hunters.

The Narts had the closest of relationships with the watery element. The founder of their people was a daughter of Don Bettyr, the ruler of the depths. Here, the similarity with ancient Scythia is remarkable. The favourite animal of Narts and Scythians alike was the stag. In the Epic the stag is often referred to as "Astassion" (the Eighteen Horned One). Curiously enough, the famous golden stags of the Scythian animal style have exactly eighteen branches on their horns.

In the absence of chronicles or documents, the language and folklore of a small settlement in the Caucasus have bridged the gap of over 2,000 years, bringing to us the sounds and images of the inimitably individualistic world of the ancient Scythians and Sarmatians.

■ **Vasily I. Abaev**

One of them shows what appears to be a goddess (women rarely figured in the imagery of the northern Black Sea metal-workers) seated on a throne, with a mirror in her hand. In front of her sits a Scythian drinking what is probably a magic potion from a horn-shaped cup.

Other plaques feature a similar drinking-horn, from which two kneeling Scythians are drinking simultaneously, in what is generally believed to be a ritual oath-taking such as that described by Herodotus.

By no means all the scenes which decorate the metal objects found in the Scythian burial mounds can be so easily interpreted. More than a few of them probably reflect preoccupations which lay at a deeper level than the affairs of everyday life, and it has been suggested they are ideological or mythological in content, illustrating the epics which nourished Scythian society (see page 15).

But let us turn again to the outward appearance of the Scythians, as they are portrayed in these images. They have regular features, and frequently severe expressions, long, shoulder-length hair and—in the majority of cases—beards and moustaches.

Their double-breasted jackets, or caftans, are trimmed with what appears to be fur and embroidered designs. They wear soft, short boots, strapped at the ankle, and pointed, hood-like caps. They are frequently portrayed bearing arms: short swords, bows and arrows carried in a case suspended from their belts, spears, battle-axes and shields. In a number of cases, they wear metal helmets and armour.

The Greek craftsmen responsible for these portraits were extremely familiar with their subjects, and this knowledge is reflected in the smallest details of the figures, scenes and compositions.

All the objects we have mentioned were produced largely in the fourth century B.C., when the Scythians occupied the whole of the area around the northern coast of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, and when their kings were at the zenith of their power and wealth.

This was the period when they built the impressive royal tombs discovered in the vicinity of the Dnieper rapids, which have also yielded many examples of the precious metalware objects which wealthy Scythians commissioned from Greek craftsmen, specifying that they should be executed "in the Scythian style".

A final group of metal objects appears to depict some of the Scythian divinities encountered in the pages of Herodotus. Thus, for example, one gold plaque (a horse's decorated frontlet or forehead ornament) from the Tsymbalka kurgan shows what appears to be the goddess Apia in the form of a serpent-woman; while the legendary hero Targitaus is shown in combat with a monster on a bronze crest found in the Bliznitsa Slopovskaya kurgan.

The outstanding discoveries which marked the dawn of Russian archaeology were followed by others. In very recent years, excavations in the kurgans of the Ukrainian steppes have yielded jewellery similar to that found at Kul Oba, Chertomlyk and Solokha. Will there be more finds? It is hard to say but it is more than likely that the earth still hides the key to further episodes in the history of the ancient Scythians.

■ **Yaroslav V. Domansky**

BOOKSHELF

UNESCO BOOKS AND PERIODICALS

■ **Planning for Satellite Broadcasting: The Indian Instructional Television Experiment,** by Romesh Chander and Kiran Karnik. ("Reports and papers on mass communication" series, No. 78) 1976, 71 pp. (8 F).

■ **Youth Participation in the Development Process: a case study in Panama,** by Luis A. Gómez de Souza and Lucía Ribeiro. (No. 18 in the International Bureau of Education's "Experiments and innovations in education" series) 1976, 101 pp. (12 F).

■ **Some Aspects of Cultural Policy in Togo,** by K.M. Aithnard. 1976, 101 pp. (12 F); **Cultural Policy in the Republic of Zaire,** a study prepared under the direction of Dr. Bokonga Ekanga Botombele. 1976, 119 pp. (14 F). (Both published in Unesco's "Studies and Documents on Cultural Policies" series).

■ **The Use of Socio-economic Indicators in Development Planning.** Eight papers discussed at 2 Unesco meetings (at University of Sussex, U.K. and in Bangkok, Thailand) 1976, 282 pp. (40 F).

■ **Schooling in the mother tongue in a multilingual environment** is the major theme of **Prospects,** Unesco's quarterly review of education (Vol. VI, No. 3, 1976). Each issue 9.50 F; annual subscription 32 F.

■ **A Bold New Architecture in the Historical Site of the Vatican** and **Three Museums Cope with Tourism** are the themes of **Museum,** Unesco's quarterly on museography (Vol. XXVIII, N° 2, 1976). Each issue 17.50 F; annual subscription 60 F.

OTHER BOOKS

■ **The Diploma Disease: Education, Qualification and Development,** by Ronald Dore. Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1976, 214 pp. (£ 5.95).

■ **Ecological Consequences of the Second Indochina War.** Published by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in collaboration with Almqvist and Wiksell International, Stockholm. 1976, 119 pp. (Sw. kr. 76.50).

■ **Reaping the Green Revolution: Food and Jobs for All** and **A Richer Harvest: New Horizons for Developing Countries,** by Sudhir Sen. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York ($ 10.95 each).

■ **The Gypsies in Sweden: A Socio-Medical Study,** by John Takman with the assistance of Lars Lindgren. Liber Förlag, Stockholm. 1976, 173 pp.

■ **Environmentalism,** by T. O' Riordan. Published by Pion Ltd., London; distributed by Academic Press, London and New York. 1976, 373 pp.

UNESCO NEWSROOM

The big 'Unesco Courier' language family

We have pleasure in recalling to readers that the Russian language edition of the "Unesco Courier", published in Moscow, celebrates its 20th anniversary at the end of December 1976. The first edition to be published outside Unesco's headquarters (in January 1957) the Russian language edition has since been followed by eleven other editions: German (Berne, September 1960) Arabic (Cairo, November 1960) Japanese (Tokyo, April 1961) Italian (Rome, January 1963) Hindi (New Delhi) and Tamil (Madras—both July 1967) Hebrew (Jerusalem, September 1968) Persian (Teheran, May 1969) Dutch (Antwerp) and Portuguese (Rio de Janeiro—both October 1972) and Turkish (Istanbul, May 1973). Two new editions—Urdu (Karachi, Pakistan) and Catalan (Barcelona, Spain) will begin publication early in 1977, thus bringing the total number of language editions in which the "Unesco Courier" is published monthly to 17. The possibility of launching a Kiswahili language edition in Kenya or Tanzania is at present under study.

What do you know about Unesco?

Why not visit Unesco at its headquarters in Paris and learn more about its history and its wide range of activities in education, culture, science and communications? Free information programmes consisting of general or specialized talks, a discussion period and film projections are offered in most languages to young people, adults and professional, cultural and social groups. Further details are available from the Unesco Visitors' Centre, 7, Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France; telephone 577-16-10, extension 22.14.

Photo Unesco

Unesco medal for Carthage

Unesco has issued a medal to commemorate its programme for the preservation of Carthage and to enable people to contribute to this international campaign. Featuring the face of the "Lady of Carthage" from a Roman mosaic, and, on the reverse side the "Horseman of Douimes" from a Punic coin, the medal is the latest in a series issued by Unesco in support of its international campaign for monuments, including Venice, Moenjodaro and Philae. The Carthage medal, available in gold (455 French francs) silver (135 F) and bronze (60 F), can be ordered through banks, numismatic dealers or directly from the Unesco Philatelic Service, Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris.

Photo Unesco

Death of Alexander Calder

The American sculptor Alexander Calder, one of the great figures of 20th-century art, died in New York on 11 November 1976 at the age of 78. He was world-famous for the moving sculptures, or mobiles, which he began to create in 1932 and for the monumental motionless "stabiles" he began to make in the late 1950s. His works now stand in public buildings and open spaces throughout the world. A 32-foot-high steel mobile called "Spirale" (see photo) by Alexander Calder has been an outstanding feature of the piazza at Unesco's Paris headquarters since 1958.

Flashes

■ *The World Health Organization received about $ 83 million to eradicate smallpox in the world while the cost of a single strategic bomber is $ 88 million says the U.N. "Development Forum" in an article pointing out the current imbalance in the allocation of world resources.*

■ *The Unesco Institute for Education in Hamburg (Fed. Rep. of Germany) currently studying problems of lifelong education, celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.*

■ *Ghana recently launched its first rural newspaper, a fortnightly published in the Ewe language, as a joint project of Unesco and the Institute of Adult Education of the University of Ghana.*

■ *An international convention prohibiting the killing or capturing of polar bears (today less than 20,000 survive) has come into effect after ratification by Canada, Denmark, Norway, U.S.A. and U.S.S.R.*

■ *47 universities now give degrees in film-making according to "The Education of the Film-maker, an international view", co-published by the Unesco Press and the American Film Institute in Washington.*

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Unesco Courier Index 1976

January

OUR SPLIT BRAIN. (V. L. Deglin). The hungry brain (E. A. Shneour). The first 4 months of life before birth (Photos). New machines to explore the brain (J. M. R. Delgado). Art treasures: Ritual bucket (Iraq).

February

THE SEARCH FOR CULTURAL IDENTITY. The Angry Young Men of Oceania (A. Wendt). African art, where the hand has ears (A. Hampâté Bâ). African arts take the high road away from Western art (M. Wahba). Children of the whale (Y. Rytkheou). Three in one: Latin America's racial and cultural originality (A. Uslar-Pietri). Art treasures: Statuette of ancestor-spirit (Ghana).

March

UNESCO'S FIRST THIRTY YEARS. Unesco's early years (J. Huxley). Julian Huxley (P. de Berrêdo Carneiro). A philosophy for Unesco (J. Huxley). 50-question quiz on Unesco. Unesco and the world outlook for tomorrow (A.-M. M'Bow). Roots of a growing world crisis. Art treasures: Nefertari (Egypt).

April

THE WORLD OF HUMOUR. Humour across frontiers (G. Mikes). Gabrovo: Bulgaria's capital of humour (B. Gerasimov). "Worm Runner's Digest" (J. McConnell). Nasrudin Hodja (I. Sop). The world will never die if it dies laughing (Y. Boriev). The political and satirical cartoon (I. Tubau). Chinese humour (K. M. Schipper). Art treasures: Man with a skin of clay (Ecuador).

May

EARTHQUAKE! Can we prevent earthquake disasters? (E. M. Fournier d'Albe). Deadliest earthquakes of the century. Tragedy in Guatemala (Photos). China predicts a major earthquake (D. Behrman). Ancestor of all seismographs. Earthquake in Pagan, Burma (P. Pichard). San Francisco's coming earthquake (K. V. Steinbrugge). Man-made earthquakes. Earthquakes in history (N. N. Ambraseys). Earthquake "signatures". Tsunamis (R. Fenton). International warning system. Atlantis—a Mediterranean island? Art treasures: Neolithic Head (Yugoslavia).

June

HABITAT. Habitat and the quality of life (G. Fradier). A third of the world in shantytowns (S. Chamecki). Squatter-builders (J. F. C. Turner). The architect: a modern scapegoat (F. A. Novikov). The needy left out in the cold (J. Bain D'Souza). Housing à la carte (Y. Friedman). The uprooted. A man's home is his castle (Photos). Hong Kong: the most urban place on earth. (D. Behrman). Art treasures: Goddess of harvests (U. S. S. R.).

July

AMERICA'S SPIRIT OF 1776. (H. S. Commager). Americans as they see the U. S. (R. W. Winks). Nobel laureates of literature. Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin. About the Declaration of Independence. Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" (B. Bailyn). Citizen Paine (J. Janssens) Colour pages. Making of the Statue of Liberty (Photos). A living heritage of cultures and peoples (Y. L. Wong and H. C. Shore). Private philanthropy in the American arts. The state as patron of the arts (N. Hanks). U. S. A.: the continuing revolution (W. W. Davenport). Art treasures: Youth with a rose (U. S. A.).

August-September

DESTINATION UNESCO: A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY AROUND THE WORLD. 68-page comic strip issue on some of the major problems Unesco has tackled during the last 30 years. By J.-M. Clément and Safoura Asfia.

October

THE SEARCH FOR A NEW WORLD ECONOMIC ORDER. (T. Bratteli and S. Amin). Arsenic and old plates (I. Selimkhanov). Brancusi (B. Brezianu). René Maheu (P. de B. Carneiro). "La Civilisation de l'Universel" (R. Maheu). International cultural centre in Burgundy (P. Ouannès). Art treasures: head on the jar lid (Ethiopia).

November

EXPLORING THE NEW SOUNDSCAPE (R. M. Schafer). Rock, pop and rising decibels (I. Bontinck and D. Mark). Tuning in to the past (D. Lowenthal). Insect "wings of song" (Photos). Early man goes through the speech barrier (A. A. Leontyev). Sound sculptures. Psychoanalysis of sound (P. Ostwald) Art treasures: Siren-borne candlestick (Hungary).

December

THE SCYTHIANS (B. B. Piotrovsky). Horsemen of the steppes (Y. Domansky). Scythian art and myths (D. S. Raevsky). Archaeological finds in the Ukraine (I. Artemenko, V. Bidzilia, B. Mozolevsky, V. Otroshchenko). Splendours of Scythian art (colour pages). Frozen tombs of Pazyryk (M. P. Zavitukhina). Graves of men and horses in the Sayan mountains (M. Griaznov). Scythian mythology and folklore (G. M. Bongard-Levin and E. A. Grantovsky). The Ossetes, 20th century heirs of ancient Scythia (V. I. Abaev). Art treasures: St. Christopher (Greece).

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Siberian art treasures preserved in ice for 2,500 years

Five centuries before the Christian Era, a nomad artist of the steppes in the Altai region of Siberia (to the southwest of Lake Baikal) sculpted this superb animal motif in wood. It depicts a griffin—a mythical winged beast of prey—with a stag's head in its jaws. The stag's horns and ears and the griffin's crest are fashioned from leather, and on the mythical monster's neck two tiny griffins are shown attacking a goose. This ornament (35 cm. high) was discovered in a frozen tomb at Pazyryk, in the Altai mountains, in 1949 (see article page 31).

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